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AUTHORITY IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF

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AUTHORITY IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF

AUTHORITY **IN** **RELIGIOUS BELIEF**

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

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PREFACE

THE Essays in this volume have already been published separately as 'Unitarian Tracts' (Nos. 47-58). Those by Mr. Jacks, Dr. Crosskey, Mr. Perry, Dr. Stopford Brooke, and Mr. Walters, prepared some years ago, have been reprinted several times; those by Dr. Herford and Theodore Parker are reprints of discourses published in their volumes of sermons; those by Dr. Crothers and Mr. Casson are reprints of tracts issued by the American Unitarian Association.

The essays by Mr. Travers on 'The Virgin Birth' and by Mr. Hopps on 'The Ultimate Authority in Religion' are published for the first time in the New Series of Tracts; the paper on 'The Knowledge of God,' by Mr. Boynton, was read at a meeting of Unitarian ministers held in London at Whitsuntide 1907.

There has of late been not a little newspaper and pulpit controversy respecting what is called 'The New Theology,' and arguments have been advanced for and against the view that the *New Theology*, as expounded by Mr. R. J. Campbell and others, is hardly distinguishable in many of its principles from comparatively old-fashioned Unitarianism. Perhaps the essays in this volume may throw some light on this controversy, though they are not issued with that object, but simply from a desire to strengthen man's faith in the essential and abiding things of religion.

W. C. B.

London, *November*, 1907.

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The Old Theology

From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. The blight of birth-sin with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption with its vicarious salvation; the incarnation with its low postulates of the relation between God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment;—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis.—JAMES MARTINEAU, 'The Seat of Authority in Religion.'

AUTHORITY IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF

I

It will conduce to clearness in the following discussion if it is understood that we are speaking not of religious belief in the abstract, but of certain generally accepted and concrete forms. Not to embarrass our discussion with doctrines generally controverted among Christians, we premise that our considerations refer to such forms of belief as are comprised in the Fatherhood of God ; the responsibility of man to God ; the immortality of the soul. And the question before us is : ' what has authority to do with our acceptance of these doctrines ? '

It should be obvious at first sight that we are not absolutely *independent* in holding any one of these beliefs. They

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come to us, in part at least, through the medium of teaching, i.e., from sources in a large measure external to ourselves. The most intelligent man, if secluded on a desert island, and cut off from all contact with the past and present experience of the race, would not attain to more than a rudimentary apprehension of the doctrines in question—if, indeed, he would attain to that. However great may be the faculties with which an individual is endowed, and however entire may be his liberty of private judgment, yet his progress in religious belief will be exceedingly small if he is left to himself. He would be as incapable of apprehending the Fatherhood of God, in the sense the term carries to the Christian, as he would, if similarly left to himself, of discovering the doctrine of evolution or the true theory of the heavens. In either case he needs the accumulated experience of the race. This is sometimes overlooked by those who assert the freedom and independence of the individual soul in religious belief. The individual may be free to

accept or reject any form of teaching according to the response it evokes from his reason or his conscience. But his freedom will not carry him far if he dispenses with teaching. Independent he may be in the sense that no one has a right to bind his judgment, but his independence will not enable him to rediscover the whole world of religious truth for himself. So in political life I am free, in the sense that no section of society has a right to dictate my conduct, but at the same time I am dependent upon society in so far that apart from the constant co-operation of my fellows, my condition would be more wretched than that of the most abject slave. The motto, 'Every man his own Theologian' is a very good one within certain narrow limits, but a very bad one beyond these limits. It no more encourages a man to reconstruct the whole of theology by the light of his unaided intelligence, than the phrase 'every man his own doctor' suggests that he should rediscover the whole science of medicine.

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Realizing, then, from the start, how largely the individual is dependent on the rest of mankind, past and present, for his religious belief, and how helpless he is in isolation, let us now inquire into the nature of this dependence. Let it be freely granted that man's knowledge of God accrues to him in virtue of his connexions with society as a whole. Let it be freely granted that the unaided reason and conscience of any individual, in any time and place, is a quite inadequate instrument for attaining a rich and satisfying religious belief. Let it be freely granted that the individual, however gifted, is very largely dependent on teaching. The question now is, upon what teaching does he depend? and in what sense is he dependent? Is the dependence involuntary and passive, or voluntary and active? Is he spiritually dependent upon the general illumination of the human race, or upon that of some restricted portion of it, and if so, on what grounds can this favoured portion make good its claim to special knowledge? Is he dependent as

the subjects of a despot are dependent on that despot's will—without choice but to obey, and without right of appeal against his decisions ? Or is it in the sense in which the citizen of a free country is dependent on the rest of the community, while himself forming one of the community upon which every other individual equally depends ? And then as to the authority this teaching may possess. Is it the authority of the emperor over his serfs, against which it is death to rebel ? Or is it the authority of a free government over its citizens, an authority quite absolute so long as it lasts, but lasting only so long as it retains the reasonable consent of the people ?

We admit, then, the dependence of the individual on teaching. We admit the authority of teaching over the individual. And the sequel will show in what sense these terms are to be taken. According to the sense in which they are taken our 'service' becomes either 'perfect freedom,' or perfect slavery.

II

In order to answer these questions we begin by laying out a few considerations connected with the psychology of belief. We will ask, 'What is the faculty by which we discern spiritual truth?'

Now in the first place it needs to be emphasized, although the statement may seem a truism, that man has *some* faculty of discernment in this matter. Too often the extreme advocates of authority assume that the soul of man is like an empty tank, which has no choice but to be filled so soon as the tap of dogma is turned on. But this absurd assumption is at once negatived by the fact that there are *competing* claims for authority (for example, the Protestant for the Bible alone, the Catholic for the Bible *plus* the Church), and therefore among those who intelligently reflect—and their case alone need be here considered—no man can accept either unless he *chooses it* to the rejection of the other. The belief of every man, it may be said, rests upon an active choice either on his part or his forefathers', and

the more intelligence there is, the more deliberate that act of choice will be. Were the claims of authority made in only one form, for example, that of the Roman Catholic Church, then, truly, this act of choice on the part of the believer would not be so apparent. But since these forms are more than one, every man who reflectively embraces one form must reflectively exclude the other, and is in a position therefore in which he must say to his Church, 'I have chosen you. You have not chosen me.' There is something in the soul of a reflecting person, of which the demands must be satisfied before he can attach himself to any Church. If those demands are not satisfied, there is no reason why he should belong to that Church rather than to any other. Acceptance of authority is, in the first instance, active and not passive: it is intelligent, and not blind; it is the result of discrimination and not a mere process of being overpowered. This holds with obvious and equal truth whether we consider a follower of Martineau, Newman, or Spurgeon.

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Of what nature, then, is this faculty of discernment? That it cannot be found among the five senses need hardly be said — 'spiritual things' are spiritually discerned.' Among other possibilities we may make a division by saying that the faculty of discernment may be either (a) Supernatural, (b) Natural. Let us briefly consider each in turn.

(a) *Supernatural*. It is stoutly maintained in some quarters that the power of discerning religious truth is a special gift of the Holy Spirit, that the unaided mind of man is unable of itself to find the truth and to know it as the truth; and that chief among the peculiar functions of the Holy Ghost is that of wondrously opening man's eyes to those things upon which his salvation depends. But here again we are confronted by the formidable difficulty that this supernatural illumination is claimed by opposing parties for contradictory affirmations. The Catholics claim it for the entire process by which their system of dogma has been built up. The Protestants claim it for the process known

as the Reformation, which partially succeeded in casting that system down. Both parties allege this same supernatural illumination in their interpretation of Scripture. How then shall we deal with a text like the famous 'this is my body,' to which each claimant gives a different interpretation? Shall we decide the conflicting claims by an appeal to Reason? If so, we appeal to a power whose fallibility both parties assert. Both parties have recourse to the supernatural guide just because the natural guide is said to be so imperfect. When therefore the supernatural guide applied to this text leads one set of men to the Catholic doctrine of the Mass, and another to the evangelical doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Reason is already debarred from settling the difference. To make Reason the arbiter would be to return to a principle which both disputants have agreed to reject. How then can the difference be settled? There is no *logical* way in which it can be done. When both parties allege the guidance of the Holy Spirit for contrary interpretations

of the same text, argument is at an end. The only practical method of ending the dispute is the method of *force majeure*. And that has been the literal origin of a very large proportion of the religious wars and persecutions which disgrace the annals of Christendom.

At this point we may note by the way a very plausible objection to the argument of the foregoing paragraph. It may be said that if the interpretations of Scripture given by those who claim supernatural guidance differ among themselves, the interpretations given by those who trust to the natural light of Reason differ no less widely; so that the advocates of both the supernatural and the natural guidance here stand upon an equality. Now undoubtedly variance of interpretation is just as likely to occur among the one party as among the other. But when those who claim infallible guidance differ in their results they differ to the utter vitiation of their claim; whereas in the case of those who take their stand on Reason such difference is not inconsistent

with their first position. And the latter have a practical advantage. If two men, both claiming the guidance of the Holy Spirit, differ in their results, the issue is a simple deadlock of contrary affirmations, and as a means of settling the difference there is nothing left but to fight it out. In the other case where neither party claims higher guidance than that of Reason, the matter is at any rate one for discussion and not one for fighting. The admission that Reason is supreme arbiter produces a state of things in which religious men may debate their differences without quarrelling, or wishing to hale one another to the stake. And we would add this, that the practical cessation of religious wars in civilized lands strongly suggests, in spite of much profession to the contrary, that the enlightened portion of the world is tacitly agreed to regard religious differences as matter of reasonable argument. Such an admission, though at present it be implied rather than expressed, involves the complete break-down of sectional claims to special illumination in the things of the spirit.

(b) *Natural*. Having indicated the formidable difficulties which beset any claim to a supernaturally imparted faculty of spiritual discernment, we pass to consider natural faculties, i.e., faculties contained in the structure of human nature as such.

But first a word must be said about the use of this term 'faculties.' The common habit of splitting up the mind into faculties, as though these faculties were so many *pieces* of the mind, is wholly misleading. There are no pieces in the mind. What we call faculties are not separate powers which may be separately used, but ways of describing the various directions in which *the whole mind* may move and act. Thus Reason is the name for the *whole man* in his reasonable moments. Conscience is the name of the whole man in his moral moments. The mind, i.e., the self-conscious personality of man 'moves together if it move at all.'

In a brief essay like this it is impossible to go far beyond a bare enumeration of what may conceivably be claimed as faculties of spiritual discernment belonging

to the structure of human nature as such. Upon the metaphysical question as to the validity of their deliverances it is not now proposed to touch.¹ Nor would it be profitable to our present purpose to discuss the meaning of many terms loosely used in this connexion, such as 'spiritual insight' or 'religious feeling.' If these terms point to important ways of discerning religious truth—and this undoubtedly they do—it is not because they have little connexion with reason and conscience, but because they have much. Limiting ourselves, therefore, to well-understood terms, we may safely sum up the various natural modes of spiritual discernment under the heads of (1) A Special Religious Faculty, (2) Reason, (3) Conscience.

(1) *A Special Religious Faculty.* There are some who make the discernment of religious truth as distinct from other types of discernment as the sensation of hearing

¹ The reader may be referred to Martineau's *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. ii. Book i.; and the same author's *A Study of Religion*, Book ii. chap. 2.

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is from the sensation of sight. Whatever claim may be put forward for this view must in the first place be subject to what has been said before about the nature of 'faculty' in general. Such a religious faculty, if it exists, is not a part of the soul, but the entire soul acting in a particular way or under particular influences. To come within the range of our present discussion, it must also belong to human nature as such. If it be a special gift to certain divinely favoured individuals, all the old difficulties are reopened which we considered under the head of supernatural. It must be regarded as natural to all, not necessarily in the sense that all do possess it, but that all may conceivably possess it, just as all may conceivably possess keen intelligence or great artistic skill. Unless it be so defined, there is danger of its being regarded as the possession of a privileged class, and so becoming the basis of sectional authority. For my own part I am bound to confess that I see no reason for setting up a separate religious faculty—not even as a name for certain

states of feeling which, however elevating to the affections, convey no assurance to the mind. But since it is by some affirmed as a distinctly natural gift, I include it here without further question. Whether or not the plea for its existence be sound, the conclusions of this essay will remain unaffected.

(2) *Reason*. The term is sufficiently understood to dispense with the discussion of its meaning here. The only discussion of which it is susceptible would carry us into fields beyond our present purpose. A word must be said, however, to dispel certain associations which the term usually carries when used in theological connexion. A person who takes Reason for his guide in religion is commonly conceived as setting himself up in a kind of pert and defiant independence against all that has previously been taught or believed. Yet this sort of independence can no more characterize the rationalist in religion than it can the rationalist in science. Every one concedes that the man of science must take reason for his guide. But in doing

this the man of science is by no means regardless of what others have found out before him. On the contrary, he gratefully takes the discoveries of his predecessors as the basis for his own work. He uses his reason to understand and accept what they can teach him ; to amend it if in this detail or that he thinks it capable of amendment ; but on the whole he takes the existing basis of science as he finds it, and uses it as the starting-point of his further work. Though the man of science is the very type of a rationalist, yet he does not scorn to learn of Euclid and Sir Isaac Newton ; he does not make his mind a *tabula rasa*, and start to rediscover the elementary laws of geometry and motion. Accepting these not in blind trust, but because they are intelligible and verifiable, he frankly acknowledges his indebtedness to others, nay, his dependence on others. Now the procedure of a rationalist in religion is similar. No more than the man of science does he spend his days in digging things up by the roots. He accepts what is verifiable in grateful reverence to

those who by thought, work, and prayer have made it so. He finds abundance of what is verifiable in the accumulated religious experience of the race, and from that he endeavours if haply he may push the bounds of darkness one step further back.

(3) *Conscience*. Through the most significant passages in the history of the Jews, and through the whole of Christian history, the voice of Conscience has been regarded as the voice of God. I do not pretend to discuss the possible justification of such a view. Nor do I now discuss the grounds for separating Conscience from Reason. There are those who would regard Reason as including Conscience as a variety within itself. But the right or wrong of that view need not concern us. If it be granted that man has some faculty of religious discernment, it will not be doubted that Conscience belongs to that faculty. And it may be safely concluded, on the same assumption, that when as a possible religious faculty, Reason and Conscience have been enumerated, there is no other faculty as

yet named in human speech to which the discernment of religious truth could be referred.

III

This account of the faculty of spiritual discernment at once supplies us with the means of stating the real grounds of authority in religion. We wish it to be clearly understood at this point that the object of the present essay, far from being merely negative, is to assert and defend the existence of such authority.

Leaving out of account any special religious faculty separate from Reason and Conscience, and restricting ourselves, for the sake of simplicity, to the two latter, it is obvious that the higher manifestations of Reason and Conscience possess authority over the lower. Let it be granted that the Reason and the Conscience are man's legitimate organs of spiritual discernment. Let it be granted that the duty of the individual in every case is to consider the deliverance of his Reason and Conscience as constituting the final decision, beyond

which there is no appeal. Then the idea of authority at once acquires positive meaning ; for it follows (1) that Reason and Conscience possess authority over all lower manifestations of my own mind ; (2) that those moments of my own life when Reason and Conscience are more active and discerning possess authority over those other moments when these faculties are less active and discerning ; (3) that individuals possessing these faculties in a higher degree than I possess them may to that extent be allowed a moral and spiritual authority over me ; (4) that in proportion as the collective Reason and Conscience of the race, or of any part of it, may be conceived as of superior insight to that of the individual, to that extent the collective wisdom and morality of the race, or of some part of it, may be conceived as of superior authority to the isolated wisdom and morality of the individual. These four inferences follow logically from the assertion that Reason and Conscience are the fountains of authority. They are drawn according to

the simple axiom that more is greater than less.

The argument may be otherwise stated as follows. The considerations which induce a man to regard Reason and Conscience as the supreme authority in religion do not necessarily involve that the Reason and Conscience in question should be exclusively *his own*. On the contrary, they leave the possibility open that the Reason and Conscience by which he guides his opinions may belong to another individual, or to a body of individuals of which he may or may not be a member, or to the human race as a whole. Whatever reasons he may have for regarding them as the spiritual authority in his own case, must lead him to make the same admission in regard to others, and if he recognizes that others possess this faculty in a degree superior to his own, to that degree he is bound to admit that they possess a spiritual authority over him. If my own reason and conscience have authority over me, it follows that the reason and conscience of a better and wiser man than myself must

have a still greater authority over me. And if the deliverance of my own spiritual faculty conflicts with the deliverance of his, how shall I escape this result?—that I must defer to him, seeing that I have undertaken to follow Reason and Conscience, and found him in both respects superior to myself. And if means can be found for giving expression to the collective wisdom and morality of large masses of mankind, must I not allow *authority* to these expressions proportioned to the degree in which a universal belief is more reliable than a private one?

But at this point another consideration of immense importance comes into view. The argument which bids me yield authority to the highest power in my own nature, namely, Reason and Conscience, does indeed involve that I must yield a yet greater authority to the still higher manifestations of that power in other natures. But then how do I recognize this superiority in the spiritual faculty of others? *What is that in me* which declares to my soul that the thoughts and judgments

of a Christ are of a higher order than what I, but for him, am likely to entertain? What is that in me which determines me to follow Christ's law of life rather than any law I might frame for myself independently of him? What is that in me which persuades me to prefer the imitation of Christ to the imitation of Buddha?

The answer to these questions brings us to the vital essence of the whole matter. It throws us finally back upon the internal witness. Let it be granted that the existence of wiser and better natures than my own involves, by our first principles, the existence of authority *external to myself*. Yet, plainly, I can recognize their superiority only in virtue of some light *internal to myself*. These superior natures do not command my spiritual allegiance by the mere force of their claim. They win me because they *evoke a response* from moral and intellectual qualities akin to those which give them their eminence over me. I am not a mere passive receptacle of their influence. I am not an inert mass to be moved whithersoever

they will. I actively respond, I choose their guidance from amid a number of inferior claimants. Were it otherwise, I should be the mere helpless victim of chance. I should stand ready to yield to the first bidder for my allegiance who should declare 'I am better and wiser than thou.' He would then become my spiritual tyrant, and I should become his spiritual slave. Thus it comes to pass that before I yield authority to the superior soul of Christ, or to the superior wisdom of a collective utterance, either that of Bible and Church, there is that in me which must be *satisfied* that superiority resides there. The truth and goodness of prophet or saint may be far beyond the capacity of my own nature, the collective wisdom of humanity may be vastly superior to my private judgment, but these superior powers must conform to my own sense of what is true and good. Otherwise, I have no warrant for believing they are superior. And, if these remarks seem truisms, let it be remembered how often good Christian people are bid to

believe a certain thing 'as a mystery,' i.e., in spite of its being unintelligible. The doctrine of the Mass, the doctrine of the Trinity, the questionable conduct ascribed to Yahweh in the Old Testament, and many other such like things, quite unintelligible on principles of reason and morality, are frequently passed off upon the credence of Christians as 'mysteries.' But if once we admit the practice of believing what is morally or rationally unintelligible, we lose all power of being able to justify ourselves in holding one belief rather than another. There is no logical limit to our possible credulity. There is no reason, for example, why a Protestant who believes in the Trinity as a 'mystery,' should not also believe in the (to him) hateful doctrine of the Mass as another 'mystery.' As 'mysteries' the doctrine of the Mass and the doctrine of the Trinity have precisely the same claim to his acceptance. Among unintelligibles there is no choice, and we can allege no reason why we should believe the unintelligibles of one sect or Church to the

exclusion of those taught by another. If '*credo quia absurdum*' justifies a man in holding the union of the two natures in Christ, it would justify him no less in maintaining the existence of centaurs and unicorns. One qualification to the above must, however, be admitted. A Protestant, for example, might take exception to the statement that he has no reason for preferring the Protestant list of 'mysteries' to the Catholic. He might allege that, in his opinion, his teachers have shown themselves more worthy of credence than the teachers of the doctrine he rejects. He might say, with whatever truth or error, that the history of the Catholic Church is such as to discredit her claims, that her secular motives and the personal character of Popes and Cardinals during the period when her doctrines were formulated throw grave suspicion on the truth of what she teaches. He might adduce a large number of such considerations to prove that his own teachers from Moses downwards, are more worthy of credit. But it is obvious that in thus

finding the ultimate ground of preference in his sense of the moral superiority of his own teachers, he is appealing, perhaps unconsciously, to that very internal standard whose ultimate claims we are here defending, in so much that his objection is in the long run a confirmation of our position.

To sum up this part of the discussion. The adoption of Reason and Conscience as the supreme authority in religion does not bind us to the practice of the absurd motto, 'Every man his own Theologian.' It does not involve isolation from the accumulating religious knowledge of mankind, as though one were to shut out the light of the sun and live by the light of a candle. It does not require the individual to start afresh and alone in discovering the things of the spirit, any more than a similar adoption in science requires the scientific man to begin *de novo*. On the contrary, the very arguments which induce me to listen with reverence to the voice within my own breast, induce me to listen with greater reverence to the grander utterance

in the collective voice of the race, and to the higher wisdom and goodness of those wiser and better than I. At the same time this higher wisdom and goodness holds its authority over any given individual only in so far as it appeals to his sense—a relatively undeveloped sense—of what is true and good. I can bow to superior wisdom and goodness only when my sense of what is true and good perceives their superiority. Any claim to authority which fails to *evoke this response* must be regarded as baseless.

IV

It now remains to speak somewhat more in detail of the types of authority which rest on measures of Wisdom and Goodness superior to those the individual may possess. These types may be conveniently classified under two broad divisions. (a) The Authority of Individuals. (b) The Authority of Aggregates of Mankind.

(a) *The Authority of Individuals.* It can hardly be doubted that, even among those

whose assertion of religious and intellectual freedom is the strongest, it is possible for specially gifted individuals to exercise a marked control over the general direction of opinion and belief. It will not be over-stating the truth to say that, even in those circles, the well-grounded authority of men eminent in thought and moral discernment is an equally potent factor with independent reflection in determining the current opinions of those about them. A complete statement of the grounds on which this *personal* authority rests it is not easy to give, and the writer is conscious that in defining them as grounds of Reason and Conscience he is using terms which very inadequately represent the full truth of the matter, though they do represent an important element of it. The act of the soul which admits and reverences the moral ascendancy of the great and good is one which cannot be fully described in any of the current terms of psychology, though it is an act of very frequent occurrence in life, and certainly one of the most honourable acts of which the soul is

capable. When once the soul has silently admitted the spiritual superiority of another, it is natural and right that the lower nature should trust the higher *in the matter of belief*, even though the beliefs of the higher go for the moment beyond the range of its own perceptions. The case of Jesus of Nazareth is, of course, typical of a personal spiritual ascendancy. And when once the soul has felt the superiority of Jesus with sufficient clearness to *trust* him, it is not to be wondered at if the loftier parts of his teaching are received largely on the strength of his authority, without direct spiritual insight into their truth. Many minds, pledged to religious freedom, thus believe on the strength of the authority of Jesus. And their doing so is in no way at variance with the position previously taken up in this essay—that doctrines should not be accepted which fail to appeal to the intelligence. For here a distinction must be made between doctrines intrinsically unintelligible (so-called ‘mysteries’) and doctrines in themselves intelligible enough, but beyond the

insight of minds where perceptions have been limited by habitual converse with a lesser order of facts. In this case a man who loves another on the ground of felt moral worth, may, without disloyalty to first principles, trust that other's perceptions of spiritual truth, though they lie beyond the immediate grasp of his own perception. To what extent this may be done is a question we need not discuss. To *some* extent, the act is reasonable ; and as a matter of fact such personal allegiance and trust, especially in regard to Jesus, have been a force in determining the faith of the world than which, at any rate, there has been none greater.

(b) *The Authority of Aggregates.* The supreme authority in matters of religion would be, if it could find adequate expression, the united voice of the Reason and Conscience of the entire human race. Such an expression would include all that is universally true in the Bible, in the teachings of Jesus, in the subsequent doctrine of the Church, together with a vast body of other truth scattered through-

out the sacred and secular literatures of all nations, and a still vaster body of truth to which as yet no expression has been given. As the whole of human society, past, present, and to come, is a larger receptacle of illumination than the individual living at any given time and place, so would the collective voice of that society at the same time and place be weightier in authority than the momentary judgment of a single man. But no such utterance having been given, nor likely to be given at any time within human prospect, we may yet allow authority to those utterances which represent the voice of minor aggregates of the race, and this authority will increase according to the character of the aggregate whose spiritual discernment is represented. Here we must interpose, however, that though the voice of an aggregate is presumably of greater authority than the voice of an individual, it need not be so. In each case the value of such authority must be tested in the manner previously laid down. No one would contend that the ethical customs of

ancient Egypt or of Mexico should have weight with the conscience of a modern Englishman, merely because they express the moral sentiments of many centuries of the lives of those great peoples. But the case is somewhat different with the Bible. Where the teaching of the Bible has, in its main features, approved itself to Reason and Conscience, that teaching gains authority first from the fact of its being the teaching of a specially gifted people rather than of one man, and secondly and chiefly from the fact that it has already been ratified by the minds and consciences of so large a portion of the civilized world.

The forms of aggregate or collective authority with which we have practically to deal are those of the Bible and the Church. With regard to the former the chief error of those who worship the authority of the Bible seems to me not their assertion of its literal infallibility, which is plainly absurd, but their refusal to see that the same authority might belong to other literatures besides that

included between Genesis and Revelation. It is true that there has never yet been collected together a literature which, as a whole, so completely answers to the term religious as that contained in the Bible. No other book, either on the ground of origin or contents, possesses the authority of the Bible—for in the sense defined the Bible has a very clear authority. But there is nothing absolute in all this. There is no reason in the nature of things why the developing religion of the human race should not, in course of time, produce a religious book of even greater authority than the Bible. There is reason to hope that this will come to pass. But at any rate it has not yet come to pass, and meantime the Bible remains the type of aggregate authority as expressed in national literature.

The idea of authority as resident in the Church, though strained beyond all just limits by its actual disciples, contains a valuable kernel of truth. It recognizes the truth, which this essay has endeavoured to set forth, that the religious voice of a

Society may have authority as distinct from the voice of Reason and Conscience of an individual. The Roman Catholic Church by its doctrine of authority recognizes, as no other Church in Christendom does, the solidarity of mankind in the matter of religious discernment. To this it joins the notion of a progressive revelation, and there again it recognizes the truth that man's knowledge of God is a developing process. No Church has so clearly, though so narrowly, recognized the truth of the evolution of moral and spiritual judgments. Its error is the practical limitation of a process, which really belongs to the entire human race, to one section of the race, namely, itself; and secondly, in fixing its authority upon individuals without allowing judgment on the content of what it commands.

V

Fully admitting, therefore, that a very real authority in religion may attach to an individual or a book or a Church, and

declaring that as a matter of fact it does so belong in specific instances, for example, in Christ, the Bible, and the Church, we must conclude by repeating what was said in a former paragraph, namely, that this authority is valid only so long as it evokes the consent of Reason and Conscience within ourselves. In other words, Authority in Religion is not absolute but conditional—conditional on its receiving an active co-operation from the highest element in the souls of those over whom it is exercised. As a matter of fact, however, Authority is usually claimed both for Church and Bible in the absolute form, i.e., I am allowed to understand things as far as I can, but if Bible or Church teaches aught that cannot be understood or morally approved, then I must believe it none the less. This is authority in the absolute form. Taking authority in the conditional form, and acknowledging the existence in others of faculties with range beyond my own, I admit their authority accordingly, and I profess myself ready to learn from them

so long as they teach what I can follow with my Reason and approve with my Conscience. As soon as they go beyond this, I am wholly at a loss for a reason why I should believe the apostles of one set of unintelligibles rather than the apostles of another.

The case may be well illustrated by the comparative position of the citizens of an absolute and a constitutional government respectively. In the first case obedience is required of them to the law whether they approve the law or not, whether the law be made for their interest or their masters'. In the second case the authority of the government, while no less real, is conditional. The citizens of a constitutional government yield an obedience to the law probably more complete than do the subjects of an absolute power; they acknowledge the *authority* which society as a whole has over them as individuals; but their recognition of this authority is conditional on its continuing to act in accordance with their sense of what is just and right. So long as the govern-

ment takes measures which approve themselves to the people's intelligence and sense and justice, so long the authority of that government remains complete. Where it fails to do this it gives place to one more in accordance with the intelligent demands of public opinion. It is this condition which makes men politically free. And the condition which makes them religiously free is of a precisely similar kind.

In conclusion, it will be seen that this essay contains a plea both for Authority and for Religious Freedom, and an endeavour to harmonize the existence of the one with the existence of the other. The plea for Religious Freedom is often so stated as to be nothing other than a plea for Religious Anarchism, i.e., Religious Nonentity. So described Religious Freedom admits no authority beyond the personal preference of the individual. But so far from being opposed, we hold that the ideas of Authority and Freedom are necessarily conjoined. They are conjoined in religion as they are conjoined

in the State. The free citizen of a free country lives under a far more real form of authority than that which an Oriental Monarch exercises over his serfs. The fact that the free man rationally *consents to* the authority which rules him goes to augment, not diminish, the power of that authority. This will be admitted. We have learnt, after centuries of strife and bloodshed, that Authority and Freedom may be united in the State, *and must* be united if either is to mean anything at all. Is the hope vain that we may yet learn and acknowledge the same truth in the sphere of religion ?

AN INTRODUCTION TO UNITARIANISM

THERE are many men and women of high moral purpose and of religious spirit who are outside the churches. They are interested in philanthropy, in education, and in all that concerns the welfare of the community ; but they are unable to accept the creeds which are commonly made the conditions of church membership. Many such persons are unaware that there exists any church to which they may belong without giving up their freedom of thought. I wish on behalf of the Unitarian Church to address the isolated liberal thinker. It will be more simple for me to speak to a person rather than to

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a class. In order that we may at once come to an understanding, let me see if I can tell

What you are

You had been educated in an evangelical church where you had been taught what is commonly called the Plan of Salvation. The foundation of this system lay in the belief that God had revealed his full will in the Bible, which was a book of infallible truth. It told how the world was created, how man was created innocent but fell into sin, how at last the Second Person of the Trinity took upon himself our humanity, was born, suffered, and died that those who believe on him might be saved. All those who did not believe on him must suffer eternal misery under the wrath of God.

It was through no will of your own that you doubted first one and then another of these doctrines. The first doctrine to fade away was that of the eternal punish-

ment of unbelievers. The proof texts in the Bible seemed to teach this, and yet it seemed so horribly unjust, so contradictory to the thought that God is love, that you felt that there must be some mistake in the reasoning that would shut out a great part of mankind from all hope.

After a while you saw that there were other mistakes in the system which had been taught you. You got some knowledge of geology, and you saw that it is impossible any longer to take the account of the creation in Genesis literally. A little reflection showed that the whole account of the fall of man must be given up. At first you tried to think that this had no effect on what seemed more essential—salvation through the blood of Christ. But, after a while, you perceived that the whole plan of redemption depended on the orthodox view of the fall of man. Then you began to study the Bible anew. You asked, Does the Bible

claim to be infallible ? If it does, is the claim verified ? You discovered that modern scholars have found many undoubted mistakes in it. Along with the loftiest thoughts they have found many human errors. This was, you learned, not a matter of conjecture but one of plain fact.

If the Bible is not infallible can the appeal to proof texts really prove anything ? Is it any longer possible to rest content with a doctrine merely because it's 'scriptural' ? Common sense answered : No.

At this time you received a further shock, when on seeking light on the popular creeds, you discovered that those who defended them often played fast and loose with words. When you discovered that a creed might be signed with mental reservations, you felt that you were being trifled with. It was all so different from the transparent candour with which men of science state the results of their re-

searches. About this time the reports of a 'heresy trial' made you look upon the church with a feeling almost of disgust. A scholar, for stating the conclusions to which his studies led him, was haled before an ecclesiastical court as if he had been guilty of a crime. The church, you said, is an enemy to the truth-seeking spirit, and so you turned away from it. Since then you have been an outsider. You have taken an interest in philanthropic associations ; you have read good books ; you have given much thought to your own home. In many ways you are conscious that you are more religious in your inner thought than you had been before ; but you have no church.

Are you satisfied ?

No. Nobody prefers being an 'outsider.' At first you rather enjoyed it. It was a fine thing to live in the open. You felt only compassion for those who were shut in by a roof. But now you are

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willing to confess that it is sometimes chilly and always a little lonely, where you are. You begin to realize the feeling of the Ancient Mariner when, after being 'alone on the wide, wide sea,' he longed for the fellowship of religion.

Oh, sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends—
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

It is that sense of 'walking together' that attracts you in the ideal of a church. How beautiful it is to belong to a society based not on wealth, or social distinction, or self-interest, but only on common human needs and aspirations! And when you think of your own children your position as an 'outsider' seems to you

still more unsatisfactory. The church of your childhood was narrow, and you outgrew it ; but there were some things you learned there which you have never outgrown. There is a sense of the sanctity of all life that you have carried with you, and which is the best thing you have to-day. You want to communicate that to your children, and you find it is no easy thing. You need the help of others, you need the proper atmosphere and environment.

And there are occasions of joy and sorrow when you go back to the church. They are the times when you need the sacramental touch to give any meaning to life.

Of another lack you have become conscious, even in your good works. It is the lack of unity. A great many good people are busily engaged in doing a great many kinds of good things. Some are visiting the sick, some are endeavouring

to reform politics, some are setting examples of noble integrity in business. How may they be brought together, so that they may encourage one another and present a solid front against the forces of evil ? How may they find one common inspiration and feel the glow which comes from fellowship ? As it is, they are often lonely and discouraged ; how may they be united into one triumphant body ?

The Church you would like

That in the church which has irritated and alienated you has been its dogmatism, its narrowness, its traditionalism. That which attracts you is the idea of a brotherhood based on common human needs and aspirations. If the Church could only be made to give up the intrusive attempt to dictate a set of opinions to its members, and give itself to the work of developing each one in his own best life, and encouraging each one in his own endeavours to realize the ideal, what a noble institution

it might become ! A university needs no formal creed, the love of sound learning is a sufficient bond. Why should not a church be united in the same way ? Instead of being a union of those who have the same opinions, let it be the union of those who desire to cultivate to the fullest their moral and spiritual natures, and to share with others the good which they may have discovered. Such a church could have no fear of heresy. One could not really 'outgrow' it, for its very purpose is to afford the necessary helps to the fullest individual development. Such a church in any community would afford a meeting-place and a home for all those who were interested in the betterment of the common life. It would, at the same time, be a refuge for the lonely and the discouraged. To 'belong to a church' would be the evidence, not of sectarian zeal, but of the broadest humanitarian sympathy.

Read these words of William Ellery Channing :

I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky, in the broad light, looking far and wide, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears, and following truth meekly, but resolutely, however arduous and solitary the path in which she leads.

Channing, you perceive, was willing, if need be, to walk alone. Happily, however, it was not necessary for him to do so, for he found 'a goodly company' ready to walk with him. This was the real meaning of the Unitarian movement in America, of which Channing was the honoured leader.

It will be worth your while to look up the history of this Unitarian movement. You will find Unitarianism has passed through all the phases of thought or feeling which you have passed through, and is now facing substantially the same ideals. These churches in their search for truth have been reluctantly compelled to give up first one and then another of

their inherited doctrines—the Trinity, the fall of man, the atonement, the eternal punishment of unbelievers, at last the infallible authority of the Bible. If you take the trouble you may find out the reasons which forced them to each step. This side of the development was negative, so that Unitarians have often felt themselves to be cut off from the larger fellowship they have desired. But in the exercise of their freedom they have come upon that which has been positive and inspiring.

The dignity and worth of human nature ; the sacredness of the moral law ; the wonderfulness of the tendency to growth and progress ; the unity to be discerned in all good things ; the prophecies which this present life gives of larger and more perfect life—these are the themes which Unitarian poets and preachers have found most inspiring. All these thoughts find their natural centre in the thought of God. Unitarians do not attempt to define the Divine Being, but, following the various lines of beauty and truth in the Universe,

they find them converging in one Divine Reality. They do not find it necessary to formulate any creed to which all must assent because they believe that the natural impulse of the human soul is religious. Each age and each nation has made its own picture of the Highest and Best. We are, by the same necessity, making our mental pictures, but the reality must always be greater than our thoughts. To the Unitarian, worship is just this continual reaching out toward the perfect life. The freer we are in our thought and spirit, the more religious we are, if we only keep up the search for that which is beyond.

As to Jesus, Unitarians find it impossible to think of him as Almighty God, and after a careful study of the records they find the proof of many of the marvels attributed to him inadequate. But as they read the New Testament they are thrilled by his words and his life. Jesus teaches that religion consists in perfect Love—love to God and man. He teaches that religion is natural, its most perfect type being the little child. He teaches

that there is no need of a mediator between God and man, for a man may go to God just as a child goes to his father. He teaches that religion is a matter not of tradition, but of personal insight, for 'the pure in heart see God.' He teaches that the true way to learn is by doing. 'He that doeth his will shall know of the doctrine.'

Such thoughts as these do not need to be enforced by any dogma of infallibility, they need only to be uttered to meet with response. In these words of Jesus, rather than in any doctrine about him, Unitarians rest their faith. Jesus is to them the pioneer of a perfectly free and spiritual religion.

In another way Unitarians have found inspirations which more than make up for what they have lost in breaking away from traditional doctrines. The great social movements of our time have enforced, as never before, the lesson that we are bound together by ties that cannot be broken. We are literally members of one body. Civilization itself is dependent

on a religious spirit. We cannot have a true nation without having men and women to whom duty is something sacred. The attempt to build up the state, the school, the family, brings the realization of religion as something of large public interest. From this standpoint the idea of the Church comes to have a new dignity and importance. It is not an institution standing apart from the state, as if it belonged to another sphere. It has a necessary function in the community ; it must train its members to serve the state in the noblest ways.

To know the full thought of modern Unitarians on the varied themes of religion you are referred not to a creed but to the writings of representatives of the faith from Channing and Martineau to the present. In reading, you must take for granted one thing : though members of a church, these men are as free as you are. They do not desire to impose their opinions on you, only to help you, if possible, in your search for truth. They welcome honest inquiry : in their church-fellowship

there is room for honest difference of opinion. They hold with that eminent Unitarian, John Milton, that

To be still searching what we do not know by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it, this is the golden rule in theology as in arithmetic, and makes the best harmony in the church, not the formal and outward union of cold, neutral, and inwardly divided minds.

I have attempted merely to give an introduction to Unitarianism, just as I should introduce two friends who ought to know each other. I fancy that you who have thought your own way out of orthodoxy will find little that is startling in the negative side of Unitarian literature. I think, however, that you may find encouragement in the discovery that what to you has been a lonely way has been travelled by others in 'a goodly company.' You may find inspiration, too, in learning that a movement that has always been loyal to the principle of freedom, and which has declared that doubt is not a sin but the condition of real thinking, has not ended in mere negation, but in a

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cheerful faith. When you come to examine it you will find that that faith is not very different from that to which you yourself have come.

Is not this something of importance to you ? Here are people who are actually organized and at work, endeavouring to realize the ideal of a church of freedom and brotherly kindness, without bigotry and without superstition—the very church of which you had dreamed. They would be stronger for your co-operation ; would not you be happier for their fellowship ?

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE LIBERAL FAITH

I—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

A BABE lies in its cradle. At first it is only vaguely conscious of a great, looming figure above it, as its father leans over the cradle side. It looks and wonders. Later, it becomes conscious of the personality of the presence, as one distinct and apart from all others. Then it looks and knows. But there comes a time in the development of that child when it recognizes the parentage of the personality, and when its baby mind conceives the new thought and its baby lips form the new word 'Father.' Henceforth, it looks and knows and loves.

And in humanity's childhood men first were conscious of the looming presence of God, a something mysterious and mighty. Then they learned the further fact of

personality, that God was a being separate and single, majestic and monarchical. But in the evolution of the race there came a time when the person became revealed as the parent, and the fact and force of God were merged into his Fatherhood.

We believe in the Fatherhood of God. We believe him to be infinite, omnipotent, universal. We give him all homage as the Creator, Continuer, and Controller of all life. We acknowledge his majesty, might, mystery. But under the splendour of his majesty we perceive the smile of his love ; in the greatness of his might we know the gentleness of his providence ; amid the shadows of the mystic Fact we hold the simple surety of his Fatherhood.

We believe this in a very real sense. It is more than a definition, a simile, a figurative term. It is a fact. We are very children of God by birth and being. We are not creatures of the clay, but kinsmen to the spiritual Infinite. God is our Father, giving to us the life, nature, and heritage of the divine. We are bound to him by the bond of being as well as by

the tie of love. As truly as our male parent is father in the flesh, God is Father in the spirit.

Only the liberal church can consistently believe in the Fatherhood of God as a real and vital fact. According to orthodoxy, God had an 'only begotten' son. He alone, if the phrase means anything, was the legitimate child of God, having full claim to the title. He alone by birth and being belongs to the family. So far as mankind is concerned, its parentage is imputed to the evil one. All men are 'conceived in sin and born in iniquity.' If this be true, mankind stands outside the family circle of God, having only the hope of being mercifully adopted and of enjoying the care of a foster father.

But with such a limited application of the term, the principle is not worth the proclamation. It degrades mankind and is a slur upon the race. It grants us a concession that we believe belongs to us as a right. Rather are we sons, not by the accommodation of name, but by the actuality of nature. We are not adopted,

but born into the family. As liberals, we proclaim the principle in all its fulness.

Because of this belief, our fear of God is lost in our faith. He is not alien and apart from us. He is very near and very dear to us. We approach him, not as subject to King, not as alien to Autocrat, not as beggar to Benefactor, but as child to Father, having clear claim to his love and care. Our prayer is not the plea for God's divine charity : it is the reaching forth for our own divine right.

Three little brothers were once walking along a dark road. Presently they heard the sound of footsteps ahead, as of some one approaching them. They began to be afraid ; and, as a form loomed up in the dusk, the younger ones began to cry. But the eldest, with greater courage, kept his eyes fixed upon the approaching form ; and finally, as it came nearer, he recognized the person, and, turning to his little brothers, exclaimed in joy, ' Don't cry, it's father ! ' And in the darker days of the past, when humanity feared God, as it crouched in his felt presence,

there was one, Jesus, whose clear, brave eyes beheld the truer fact, and who, catching a glimpse of the face of deity, turned to his brethren and proclaimed the Fatherhood of God. And we, living centuries afterward, have entered the glorious consciousness of the same truth.

2—THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

A little miss and I, walking home one day from Sunday-school, talked about the lesson on brotherhood that she had just learned. It had evidently made a deep impression on her ; for, after telling me about it, she said, ' Then you are my brother.' ' Yes,' I replied. ' And that man,' pointing to a man on the other side of the street, ' is my brother.' Again I assented. We walked on in silence for a little. Just in front of us was a Chinaman, grotesque and foreign-featured. Jeannie looked at him long, and finally said, as the evident outcome of her thought, ' Then he must be my brother also.' And I knew that she at least had learned the lesson of brotherhood.

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It is just that lesson that we, as Unitarians, seek to learn and teach. The principle of brotherhood is the sure sequence of the principle of fatherhood. They who are children of the same Father must necessarily be brothers. There is no alternative, no avoidance of the inevitable inference. If we would call God Father, we must call man brother. Our second principle is the companion truth of the first, and in no way can they be dissociated.

This term is an inclusive one. The human race is included in its wide scope. There are no exceptions, from whatsoever cause. It is not limited to those we love or know. We may not shut out from the circle the low, the unfamiliar, the despised. The circle is as broad as human life. There lives no man, of any colour, creed, caste, condition, character, who may rightly be excluded from the circling bond, and who has not full claim to the full rights of the brotherhood of man.

Such is the breadth and beauty of brotherhood. Such is the bond that binds

man to man. It overlooks differences of degree and doctrine ; it eliminates boundary lines of strife and separateness ; it penetrates the surface of form and reveals the significance of fact ; it brushes aside the paltry divisions of racial and religious prejudice, and blends the whole race in a common brotherhood. Every man becomes a kinsman, and the whole world a home.

A Federal soldier was in the firing line in a battle of the Civil War in America. Amid the smoke and din of the conflict he kept on loading his piece and firing at the approaching enemy. The opposing line came nearer, and the soldier aimed at a foremost figure. Just then the smoke lifted for a moment, and he recognized the one he was about to shoot as his brother, who had lived in the South and had joined the Confederate forces. Just in time the revelation came. The trigger was not pulled, and, where a moment before foes fought, brothers met.

In the strife of life to-day we meet each other too often as foemen. We imagine

that life is a struggle for existence, and that we are justified in our selfish jostling of our fellow-men. Business becomes a battle-field, and Love is an angel that hovers on the outskirts, to pity when the fight is over. But, believing in the brotherhood of man, we must also accept the social sequence of the principle. In the face of the foe we behold the features of the friend. And with the revelation of this fact we stand for a new social ideal, in which men shall no longer strive as self-seekers, but shall co-operate as friends and brothers all.



3—THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS

A picnicking party, in the course of the day's adventures, descended a very deep and precipitous ravine. After exploring the bottom, they looked in vain for the way to ascend. High above showed a blue streak of sunlit sky, but no path to reach it. Most spent their time in regretting or in theorizing. Some were quite hopeless. But one of the number, more enterprising and wise, went apart,

searched every cranny and corner and cliff, and finally found a narrow path that led to the upper plain. Coming back, he informed the party, and under his guidance all were soon in safety and sunshine upon the higher level.

Twenty centuries ago humanity lived on the low level of selfish life. The atmosphere was chill, the scope narrow, the limits oppressive. High above it humanity caught momentary glimpses of the brightness of the ideal and the beauty of a higher and holier life. Finally, a young man determined that he should ascend. So he went apart from his fellows, and after long years of search found a pathway that led upward into the sunshine. He returned to the multitude below, told it of his discovery, and tried to induce it to make the ascent. But the multitude would not believe his report, but put him to death. He died ; but his message lived, and the way upward had been marked out for the feet of future men. That young man was Jesus of Nazareth.

What avails it if the world, regretting

his death, should deify him, build countless temples in his name, and make merit of his brave death? What avails it if Christendom has pinned him in the highest, and made him very God? One fact remains, and the fact of supremest import. The path he pointed out is still there, leading from vice to virtue, from shadow to sunshine, from degradation to divinity. It is the path of the love-life. He who will may tread it. He who would follow the leadership of Jesus *must* tread it.

7 The leadership of Jesus may mean more to the Unitarian than to any other. Those who make him deity set an impossible task before mankind. If you tie a log to one man and a balloon to another, and bid them both rise, you are not more unjust than are they who command a finite man to follow the example of the infinite God. But to believe in his being human like ourselves is to be given new hope and courage. What he has done, we can do; where he has gone, we can go; what he has accomplished, we can achieve. He leads, and we may follow.

A boy stood on the street corner of an Italian city, playing a violin. The boy was young, the instrument was ill-tuned, the strains were not attractive. The people passed by without responding to his appeals. A celebrated violinist happened along, and, pityingly, took the violin from the boy. After tuning its strings, he began to play. As the perfect music filled the air, the crowd heard, stopped, gathered around, responded. And when the violin was handed back to him, the boy took it with a new reverence and a new hope. That the old instrument was capable of such divine music he had never dreamed.

And Jesus showed to us the harmonies of which the instrument of human nature was capable. Tuning it to the key-note of love, he played so sweet a song that in twenty centuries we have not forgotten its beauty. And the same instrument lies in our hands to-day. From it, if we follow the leadership of Jesus, we shall draw the same exquisite strains of the song of the love-life.

4—SALVATION BY CHARACTER

A flower grows in the open field. It has within itself certain potential powers. There is a living energy that gives it life and growth. There is a law of its being that communicates itself to every minutest cell, and directs its evolution along certain lines. The flower is saved from imperfection and becomes the perfect bloom by obedience to that inner law.

A soul, like a seed, has within itself certain inherent powers. There is a designed perfection of life possible to both men and flowers. In order to attain it, there must be obedience to the law of God. It becomes the religious business of life to save oneself from the imperfect and incomplete. Salvation is the attainment of the best and the God-intended in character.

Salvation thus is a natural process. It is the outworking in life of law. It is the development of character. There is nothing artificial about it. There is no supernatural magic by which a stunted stalk can become at once a perfect blossom, or a stunted soul be saved in a moment

or by a single act from meanness and imperfection. Salvation is strength, and strength comes by the exercise of our diviner faculties. Salvation is growth, and growth comes by the yielding to the impulse of God in law. Salvation is perfection, and perfection comes by perfect obedience. And strength, growth, and perfection become manifest in character.

Salvation, then, comes less by faith than by force, less by belief than by being, less by the confession of a creed than by the character of a life. It is not a rope let down from above, so much as a vine growing upward from below. It is the daily doing of the helpful deed. It is the upward and outward reaching of the aspiring soul. It is that process by which we build strong, good, noble character.

The different sects might be likened to ticket-sellers. One claims that only a red ticket will admit one to the glories of heaven. Another makes similar claim for the white ticket, while a third warns his hearers to have none but a blue one. If we have any part in the proceeding, it

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is to proclaim to the anxious crowd the single and simple message: 'Friends, it isn't the colour of the ticket that counts. It is the cleanness of the hand that knocks for admission.'

5—THE PROGRESS OF MANKIND

We believe in evolution as an eternal force in all life, hence we believe in the progress of mankind. For untold millions of years life on this planet has been struggling upward to assume new and higher forms. Not a day has passed in ten million years but life was higher at sunset than at dawn. With infinite slowness, but with infinite sureness, a subtle power has been at work in the clay, shaping, purifying, perfecting. From amoeba to man the pathway ran, up which life has made its age-old ascent.

And to-day, in the life of modern men, the principle is still actively at work. By the irresistible impulse of God mankind is still making ascent toward higher levels and nobler life. Eternal progress is the purpose and privilege of life. As surely

as the tides of the ocean rise, so surely is mankind caught in the resistless uplift of the power of God.

Hence it becomes man's duty to accept new conditions, new conceptions, new commands. Religion deals with the present. Truth is not so much an echo from the ancient past, as it is a living voice in modern time. Revelation is the ray direct, not a mere reflection. Each new day brings a new truth and a new task. The facts or faith of any other age cannot suffice for this. Truth assumes new forms to fit the mental growth of man. The living truth cannot be caught in the meshes of a creed. Creeds are but the lifeless husk of the nut, from which the kernel has escaped to become the living, growing, branching tree.

We believe in the wisdom and the duty of that divine discontent that shall stir us ever to new life and nobler endeavour. What has been done in the past we can do in the present, and we can do more. It is our religious duty to make perpetual progress in thought, life, liberty, and love.

We believe in the immortality and the eternal progress of the soul. This present existence is only a period and a part of life total. Death is but the gateway through which the soul shall pass to life eternal. The path we tread goes on for ever and for ever. Our feet touch the clay only that we may prepare for still higher flight. The root life of the present shall sometime blossom into the flower of the immortal. Death is the winter that may blast the leaf, but may not touch the life that made the leaf, and shall make others in the summers yet to come.

It often seems as though life were chaotic, unplanned, unguided. Crises come, evils devastate, wrong triumphs, chaos prevails. Nations are caught in the surge of social revolution, and old orders are swept under and out. But we believe that by every surge and swell of life, social, political, industrial, God's purpose moves to its fulfilment, and that by every swinging cycle of evolution or revolution mankind makes progress onward and upward for ever.

SALVATION : WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

THE Unitarian form of Christianity is very often dismissed as a faith which may possibly satisfy the spiritual wants of respectable and educated people, who in the enjoyment of the prosperities of the world are beyond anxiety, and in attachment to the common moralities of life are above suspicion, but which is altogether unable to meet the passionate sins and the wilder and deeper emotions of the tried and tempted heart of humanity. Yet the greatest agony has undoubtedly been borne by the human race through a sense of departure from God ; and unless this form of Christianity of which I am about to speak is a form which can meet the condition of man as a being who has not achieved the high standard of his perfect-

ness ; unless it can help us conquer temptation and to make our peace with God ; unless it can in some real sense save the world from its sins, I admit at once that it does not deserve the name of a religion. The problem how, having sinned, we are to make our peace with our Father in heaven, has perplexed the conscience of our race. Almost all the answers ever given may be classified under three great divisions, either as giving the first importance to the performance of the right ceremony, or to the acceptance of a correct doctrine, or to the disposition of a touched heart. The principle is the same with respect to the ceremony, whether it be a Catholic mass or a hecatomb offered to Jupiter. The principle is the same with respect to doctrine, whether it be belief in the Athanasian Creed or the Koran. The principle is the same with respect to the disposition of the heart, whether it be the loving heart of the most nobly cultured or of the superstitious devotee. Ceremonialism in its extreme form gives an artificial value to sacrifices and prayers ;

apart from the disposition of the worshipper. Southey's 'Curse of Kehama' illustrates the last result of this system when it describes how by the performance of ceremonies the worst men, bent upon the worst designs, may become formidable to the deities and render an Incarnation necessary. The fiction of Paganism may veil itself in Christian phraseology; and a counterpart of the same feeling be found in coarse representations of the power of the blood of Christ shed on the cross to win heaven for all who call upon his name, apart from the influence of his sacrifice upon their characters and lives.

The second answer, that salvation depends upon the accuracy of our belief, meets in this country with a larger acceptance. If we only 'believe,' preachers say, we shall be the people of God, 'the sheep of his pasture,' the children of his grace. In this thought many find a great and gracious peace; and the Protestant gains from his form of sound doctrine the same kind of satisfaction which the Catholic receives from an infallible Church. If

the mind can be persuaded of the existence of an infallible authority its restlessness is over ; it no longer perplexes itself with the vast problems yawning like deep caverns among the pleasant fields of culture, or with the speculations which lift their snow-clad summits to the clouds and fling darkening shadows, weird storms, and devastating cataracts down the sweet valleys of a quiet life. An absolute decision—what a comfort to the wearied, aching thinker ! Can we not understand its charm ? Amid the busy cares and struggles of commercial, political, and sectarian life, a passionate desire for quietness easily seizes upon the mind ; and when the Protestant can once accept the Creed of his Church as his title-deed to heaven, he finds a comforting calm, and practically thinks no more.

When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

A creed stands to many minds in relation to heavenly things like the title-

deed to an estate, and gives the same comfortable assurance of property. Yet to me it is the vainest of all foundations for an eternal hope. To believe aright about the infinite God, to discern the boundaries of his justice, to discover the precise tie between his Spirit and the spirit that was in Christ—who are we that we can rest our expectations of mercy on the perfect accomplishment of such a task? What is the life that we possess, with its passions, its hopes, its doubts, its aspirations, flowing from the dark past to the dark future?—who can answer? If the accuracy of my knowledge of God is to be my salvation, I despair. His Spirit baffles me; he rides upon the wind; the whirlwind is his chariot. In seasons of holy meditation he seems very near, but when wilder passions rage I grope about that I may find him. The word ‘God’ comes lightly to human lips, but it is the name of an unfathomed Life. When men say, ‘Believe our creed and you will be redeemed,’ I reply, not to them, but to the God whose name they so fluently use,

‘Before thee my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. In the darkness around thy throne I would quiet myself as a weary child.’ Is the Lord God Almighty the supreme Egotist of the universe, chiefly caring that we his mortal children should have a right opinion about his glory? Nay; what is our opinion worth that our welfare in eternity is to depend upon its correctness? How much time and study can we bestow upon any subject? We can think, we can hope, we can cherish faith that the perfect circle will complete the broken arc; but beyond trust, and hope, and faith, how dare we dogmatize? Over all sermons ever preached, over all religious books ever written, the most fitting prayer to breathe is a prayer that God may be very patient with our ignorance:

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
 Confusions of a wasted youth;
 Forgive them where they fail in truth.
 And in thy wisdom make me wise.

Believe this creed or that as we may, not the motion of an atom is affected, and the

great course of history sweeps onward. Believe or doubt the fact as we may, in God's great hands we stand. We cannot separate ourselves from him; we are every day in the paradise of his peace, } or in the arid desert of our selfishness. }

Jesus Christ revealed the religion neither of ceremony nor of dogma, but of pure and perfect being. His own spirit being at one with God, he sought for his disciples the oneness that he possessed himself. Many theories of Christian salvation have been given. The early Fathers thought that Christ paid the price to Satan, to rescue man from bondage to his wiles. Then came the notion that the compensation was not made to Satan, but to God. This was followed by the doctrine of a superabundance of merit in Christ upon which all men might draw. But what, according to Christ, is that condition which is termed salvation? What is there in being saved that we should desire it? Let us know what salvation is, and what the word means.

I find the answer in that mighty word of

} Christ's—'Be ye perfect as your Father
 in heaven is perfect.' Salvation is, nega-
 tively, deliverance from error, disease,
 iniquity; positively, the education of
 every faculty and feeling to the standard
 of the perfect man. Christ speaks of
 those entering the kingdom of heaven as
 growing in godliness. He likens his king-
 dom to a grain of mustard-seed, to the
 leaven hidden in the measures of meal;
 and all his metaphors indicate the growth
 of our being, Godward. To be saved is
 not to get rid of our nature; it is the
 growth, the development, the culture of
 the nature God has given. Jesus Christ
 honours natural conscience: 'Why judge
 ye not yourselves what is right?' He
 makes natural affections the revelation of
 God's love: 'If ye being evil know how
 to give good gifts unto your children, how
 much more shall your Father who is in
 heaven give good things to them that ask
 him?' Paul appeals to natural reason:
 'Prove all things; hold fast that which
 is good.' In order to be saved, therefore,
 it is necessary to educate reason, and it is

not necessary to believe anything contrary to reason ; it is necessary to educate conscience, and not to surrender its voice to the dicta of priest or sect ; it is necessary to educate natural affection, and not to credit tales of God which represent him as acting towards men as no man would act to his child. My salvation is not imperilled if I reject the Trinity, because I cannot find any grounds for believing it ; or the Atonement, because it seems to me to contradict the simple laws of natural justice ; or the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, because I reject it as at war with natural affection.

Following the same course of argument, salvation is not the getting to heaven when we deserve hell. I have heard preachers speak, who have seemed to me to reduce the Gospel of Christ to this : ' We deserve hell ; we do not wish to be punished for our iniquities ; we want to be saved, that is, to escape from the punishment due to us.' Salvation I cannot believe to be any such escape from the punishment due to sin. Sin is no light

matter. It is a curse within and without, and it brings its inevitable penalty. We must not expect that if we are drunkards we shall escape the punishment due to drunkards. Does any man escape it? Is there any miracle to stop the physical effect of his indulgence? We must not expect to lie and not to receive the punishment due to liars, to be unchaste and not receive the penalty of unchastity. Do you say this is a hard gospel? I say, do you think God would love us better if he made sin less terrible? Is not the sign of God's dearest love that he would make us his noble, pure, and upright children? Would it be better for the world if men could lie and cheat and be impure, and then, by the special interference of God, every bad effect be lightly wiped away? God's punishments must be redeeming in their influence, because, being perfectly good, he cannot endure that iniquity should be eternal. In the gospel which I preach, the great purpose of any punishment inflicted by God is to purify life, so that in time or eternity the pain that

follows sin will make the sin itself hateful. Is it honourable for a man ashamed of sin to bow down before God, and say, ' Father, do not touch me, do not hurt me, do not pain me ' ? Is it not more manly and more penitent to say, ' Father, touch me with thy purifying fire, so that the sin may be burnt out of my soul ' ? Is not true penitence the desire to get rid of the guilt itself ? If a servant has wronged you, and should come to you and say, ' Pardon me, do nothing to me, let me escape, treat me as though I had committed no crime,' should you respect him as much as you would should he say, ' Let me work out the penalty, put me through any discipline you like, only let me prove that I am sorry for my sin ' ? And so I bow down before God, and cry, ' Father, if need be, touch my heart with pain ; only do this, take my iniquity away from me, and make me love no more the wicked thought or deed.'

A true salvation affects the whole of our nature, and reaches every nook and corner of our being. It is not confined

to the one subject of theology. Salvation has been made far too technical. It concerns the whole man.

God has been loved with the soul but not the mind. When religious sensibilities are quickened in ignorant men, we hear sneers against philosophy and science, and mysterious dogmas are more readily accepted than intelligible laws are credited. Those whose faith is warmer than their knowledge is clear, look upon a natural law suspiciously, and esteem portents and catastrophes as more evident signs of God than the unfailing glory of the seasons. There are thousands, I believe, who, if the sun should stand still to-morrow, would say, 'Yes, it is true; there is a God,' for hundreds who see that there is a wonder as great as though the sun stood still in the unfailing loveliness of the daily dawn. When spiritual excitement exceeds mental strength, religion is full of terrors. The savage is afraid of the world in which he lives; he does not know what may happen; he is in the dark, and any fate is credible. Many Christians seem to

have the same dread. They seek shelter against the wrath of God ; they are ready to believe in anything to save themselves.

When religious excitement exceeds the tenderness of the heart, bitter cruelties have been practised in the name of God : he has been regarded as a fierce tyrant defending his throne against rebels, casting down his enemies in his vengeance, and never receiving back to his grace the apostate and the doomed. It is simply astonishing to note the way in which many worshippers have credited God with actions they would not dare to attribute to any human being with a generous heart. Take those wars described in the Old Testament. It is, I suppose, a matter of general belief, that God commanded the destruction of man, woman, and child, by the invading armies of the Jews. Suppose Count Moltke had carried on war against France in the way in which Joshua is said to have been directed by Jehovah to attack the Canaanites, the civilized world would have stood aghast.

When the religious faculty is excited

without moral culture, we have a type of character in which there is more eagerness to propitiate a God in heaven, than to walk justly among men on earth. If a low standard of moral culture is united with fervency of prayer, men are less watchful in their conduct with respect to such smaller vices as meanness, trickery, and white-lying. To find a man sincerely eager to worship in the right way and believe the correct creed, and yet not specially trustworthy in ordinary dealings, is at first sight very strange ; but the explanation is simple. The soul has been more troubled about its future destiny than the conscience has been exercised about its present duties.

I call, therefore, that man saved who is noble in mind and heart and soul. I call that man *saved in mind* whose intellect is honestly disciplined, and swayed in its judgment by no personal prejudice ; who is not too proud of his own opinions ever to follow a brighter light, or too impatient with his neighbours to understand the secrets of their souls ; who is simply

anxious to see the facts of the universe as they are, whether they prove him to be utterly mistaken or lowly wise ; who is not prevented from accepting great principles by subtile metaphysical difficulties or verbal quibbles, but can subordinate the partial and local to the universal ; who is so conscious of the infinite mystery that he never ceases to be a learner, and who in profound reverence for the unbounded truth can unite the questioning eagerness of a child with the lowliness of a disciple.

I call that man *saved in heart*, who is true to his friends and generous to his foes ; who delights rather in the love of whatsoever is great and good than in mean and carping criticism ; who can toil and sacrifice for what he loves, and does not waste in idle sentiment the vigour of a deep affection ; who, when once love is given, can trust against suspicion, and hope against the very seeing of the eye ; who can delight in serving without making his calculation as to the percentage of profit to be gained ; whose faithfulness to his friends does not vary with the

accidents of earthly fortune ; who can endure to suffer for duty, and can temper gentleness towards the sinner with judgment on the crime ; who never spreads an ill tale for the mere ill tale's sake, recognizing the sacredness of an honourable repute ; who is more anxious to be deserving of kindly judgment than to injure another's welfare ; who can preserve independence without dogmatism, and be true to himself without being false to his neighbours ; whose love to a good cause grows stronger in danger, and who, where there is the greater need, there tasks himself to render the more generous service—I call that man saved in heart who has the true heart of a noble gentleman.

I call that man *saved in conscience*, who simply follows where his duty leads ; who has no wish save to do the simple right ; who does not desire his own pleasure if it be condemned by the righteousness of God ; who makes no boast of his desire to serve the Lord, but when the event demands, arises in silent strength equal to the occasion's call ; who

does not neglect any post he holds because its rank is not higher ; who can watch and wait or strive and struggle in the ranks, or command the rise and fall of the battle's heat, as one not chiefly desirous that he himself should triumph, but that God's will should be done ; who can be deterred by no personal neglect or insult from doing his own duty, and amid praise or blame can labour on with an unfaltering courage, and alone or with the crowd be faithful to the last. I call that man saved who can temper life's graver duties with a genial joy ; who can laugh as heartily as he can pray, and enjoy the play of fine humour as thoroughly as he can join in the burden of a psalm ; who does not frown upon the light fancies of an hour, any more than he scoffs at the call to worship ; who can smile with those who smile, and can weep with those who weep, and who would darken with no ungenial gloom the gladness of a festival, even as he would not disturb with unprovoked mirth the sanctity of a house of prayer. I call that man saved whose whole life of thought

and love and duty and gladness is over-arched by the deep consciousness of the Infinite, as the measureless heavens over-arch the measured earth ; who believes in higher truth yet to be seen, and nobler duty yet to be done, sweeter happiness yet to be revealed, and purer affection yet to fill the gladsome heart ; and who, drawing near to the Infinite in the hour of his worship, is not contented with any achievement of his own, but presses onward towards the mark of his high calling in Christ Jesus.

I call that man saved who recognizes the claims of each of the varied relationships of life ; who does not care for his own spiritual welfare alone, and is not enwrapped merely with the interests of his own family, but binds up something of his own honour with the honour of his native land, making its freedom his freedom, its glory his glory, so that as he strives for his own perfect manhood he also labours to save his country from being stained by any wrong ; who is not so absorbed with himself and his country

that he has no interest in the world beyond, but feels an indignant scorn when evil powers sway earthly destinies, feeling as his own the freedom of many lands, and having no perfect self-content so long as justice is outraged and oppression mighty. I call that man saved whose love of God is the simple devotion of a lowly soul ; who has the Gospel of Christ writ upon the fleshly tablets of his own heart ; who from very finite achievement looks upwards to an unbounded glory ; who is genial and patient with those who bend not at his altar, and respects the sanctities of all worshipful souls ; who adores because he loves, not because he fears ; and who, were there no heaven to come, would still love righteousness, and, were there no hell, would hate iniquity. I call that man saved in whom these elements of character are blended so as to form a perfect whole : ' As the body is one and hath many members, so also is Christ.'

This salvation of which I speak has been realized in history by Jesus Christ alone. In Christ I recognize one who has upon

this earth made manifest perfect salvation before God. The painter has ever before him an image he never puts upon canvas, which haunts his secret imagining, and which he can never render visible to others. The poet ever hears songs ringing within his heart which he can never sing :

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter.

To this great world, the life of Jesus Christ is the very utterance of the melody which all saintly souls have heard in their sweetest dreams. Jesus Christ walks on earth the actual image of the glory secretly worshipped for ages, but undescribed and unseen.

He is the one ideal, above us ever—and our salvation depends upon the prayerful fashioning of our spirits to the likeness of his unstained perfectness.

What, then, must we do to be saved ? The definition I have given will guide to the answer. To gain salvation from error, we must educate our minds, and develop our capacities for accumulating knowledge ;

to gain salvation from evil passions, watch over our hearts ; to gain salvation from sin, educate conscience by daily duty and Christian prayer. Jesus Christ appeals to our divinest and noblest powers ; he asserts the loftiest standard for the meanest heart ; he never condescends to men, never speaks down to the world, never adapts a pure sentiment to an impure practice ; he makes the grandest appeals to the commonest crowd gathering around him.

It seems to me that Christ did as though one should go to the lowest and worst parts of this town and be surrounded with thieves and prostitutes, far away from respectable people ; and then in such a place and to such people say, ' Ye are the children of God, and the heaven of heavens is open to you.'

There is happily in the Gospels one example among others in which Christ himself appears to answer the problem I am discussing, in a narrative which shows me more about the doctrine of salvation than perhaps any the Bible contains. He went into the house of the Pharisee,

and you remember the disagreeable reception he experienced. It was a cold entertainment, hovering between welcome and no welcome. Have you never noticed, in social life, the reception of a man whom there is no wish to offend, but no desire to honour ? The entertainers would be rather pleased (it is evident) if the unfortunate victim were not in their house, and yet they have felt bound to ask him to come.

What guest can be in a more chilling position in any house than one who understands that his host feels he could not avoid giving the invitation, and yet, having invited him, does not take any trouble to show him kindly regard ? Simon clearly felt that there was some probability Christ might be a prophet, but having brought him home he had no affection to spend upon him, and gave him no water for his feet. In a stiff, formal company, when no one seems to have a heart to waste on a friend, and there is no loving welcome, while every phrase is measured, the entrance of a child into the room, wander-

ing from one to another, seeking kindly words and the touch of a greeting hand, is an intense blessing—anything to caress, anything to fondle, anything upon which to pour a little tenderness, is like light from heaven. The relief to Christ as he sat at the Pharisee's table, chilled with ungracious welcome, came with the entrance of a woman 'that was a sinner,' human, passionate, tearful, with heart stained, but still with a heart ; with love flung upon unhallowed altars, but at least love ; with passion wrongfully trusted, but at least human passion. His very feet were washed with tears in the house where no water had been offered him ; anointed with precious ointment where his head had been thought unworthy ; kissed with passionate kisses when no sign of welcome had met his lips. Here at least was a woman who could love wrongfully and wildly, but yet love ; she could fling away her heart, although upon a worthless soul ; she could escape from self ; and although self was forgotten for an unworthy object, she could still escape from self, and fall

weeping at the feet of a holy saint even when the consciousness of sin was a terror and a shame. A weeping, passionate, human heart was flung at the feet of Christ in the presence of a proud, calculating, formal Pharisee. Note the characteristically distinct thoughts which arise in the mind of Christ and of Simon, and understand the mystery of this doctrine of salvation. Simon's first thought was, 'This is no prophet; suspicion is justified; my coldness is a duty. This man, if he were a prophet, would have known what manner of woman this is.' Christ's first thought was—God's delight in human love—'Tell me, Simon, which of two debtors will love God most?' Simon's first thought was, Have I got the right prophet in my house? Christ's, Who loves God the best? Cannot we Christians of modern days take a lesson? Are we not more concerned with Simon about the right idea of a prophet, than with Christ as to who loved God best? Some professing Christians seem convinced that if they can get hold of the right idea of a

prophet, give the correct definition of the nature of Christ, and make no mistake about dividing the substance and confounding the persons, all will be well. Yet Christ lifts us into another sphere of being when he says, 'Tell me who will love him most.' There is joy, beauty, peace, comfort, in the form of this appeal—which of those two debtors, the one who owed fifty and the other five hundred pence, will love God most?

The love of a debtor dear to God! This is a commercial age, and perhaps this phrase may reveal something of God's tenderness. I think if a business man's heart were really consulted, those for whom he has the least affection will prove to be those from whom he never hopes to obtain just debts. He knows many disagreeable people, but probably those who *must* be forgiven 'five hundred pence' are the most disagreeable of all the people he meets. He knows many people, it may be, lax in matters of morality; but has no such real aversion to them as to those forgiven perforce 'five hundred pence.' The kind

of forgiveness is obnoxious. If a man owes a sum which he might with effort pay, but you for the sake of rendering his life more pleasant, from love to the man, from desire that his days should be led beneath the sunshine, take off the burden from his weary heart, and send him on his way rejoicing, you have done a good deed, and the consciousness of a good deed may prove a pleasant solace for deficient cash. You might have had the money, but there is a virtue in your forgiveness, since you have chosen to lack the debt you might have received in full, in order that a heavy burden may no longer rest upon a poor friend's life. But when the man has nothing to pay, your forgiveness has little comfort in it ; there is loss, but no reward in the consciousness of a good deed ; you could not get the money if you would. Possibly the feeling least approaching to a virtue in a business man's heart is the kind of feeling he has to a man who has ' nothing to pay ' a righteous debt ; yet this is the very forgiveness Christ declares to be extended from God to man—' when

they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.' What have we to pay to God for broken laws and ill passions, vexing the sanctities of earth? Yet the kind of love which upon earth among men is the most difficult to cherish, will be manifested by the Almighty. My little child brings me sometimes from the field dandelions, daisies, and meadow-sweet, and insists that her handful of dandelions, daisies, and meadow-sweet, shall be put into the vase side by side with the moss-rose and the garden fuchsia; they are *her* gift which she brings with proud hand and proud heart, and there in the place of honour they must be, and the garden flowers have no such loveliness and perfume because they are laden with no such love. Even so, between man and God, these poor wild flowers we bring from earth may yet hope for a place among the amaranths gathered by the saints in paradise, if offered in childlike faith.

What is the secret of this forgiveness? Why should there be much forgiveness for much love? Is it not this—whatever

- takes us out of ourselves is a redeeming power, and to be taken out of ourselves in the presence of the perfect purity of Christ is a practical redemption. The great mass of sins done in this world do not come from deliberate intention to offend God, but from following any impulse that may please ourselves. I do not think we often sit down—I am speaking of the class higher than those who go into the gaol, I am speaking of respectable men and women—and say, ‘God wishes one thing, I will do the opposite ; God may be offended, I risk his anger ’ ; but we follow every impulse, good, bad, indifferent, and find the shame upon us greater than we imagined. The first condition of redemption is to cast the heart upon the image of a Divine life, to turn to the Lord above us, and to the Christ who is in him. Flinging ourselves on God and Christ, the sin will pass away from us. I often think when I read great books upon faith, upon the words, ‘ Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.’ What faith was it ? The woman’s faith was manifest when she

put on one side dread of scorn, false shame, helpless despair, and fell at the Lord's feet, having faith in a love greater than her sin. 'Will the holy saint not scorn the sinner?' That thought was put away. 'Dare I lift up my head again? Must I not be for ever an outcast?' That thought vanished. 'Am I not too bad to return to God?' That was left behind. 'How can I for very shame face one who will hate iniquity?' That fear vanished. Faith remained—faith in a love greater than human sin, and THAT is *saving faith* for every one of us. We have sinned before God; we must put aside all idea that God will scorn us, all fancy that we are compelled to dwell in sin for ever, all fear lest his mercy cannot reach us, all poor notions that we are too wicked to be uplifted, all false shame and desire to avoid his gaze, *having faith* that the love of the poorest heart will be an accepted offering.

I do not think salvation is to be gained by unhealthful exaggeration of sin. I have heard men preach as though they

thought the more wicked they painted themselves, the better God would love them. Let us forget our sin in the beauty of the holiness of Christ. The less we brood over our guilt, the more we forget ourselves in him, the nobler we are. Salvation is sometimes painted as a spasmodic action—to be achieved in a moment. It is a life-long development.

I believe in God's love. It is not an attribute which theologians can define; it is not a kind of feeling which can be obtained by the study of analytical logic; but it is love. I believe in God's love just as I believe in human love, the love of heart to heart. It is not that God condescends to us, and stoops down from his greatness to accommodate himself to us. Where there is a sense of condescension, love is poor. We do not condescend to the wants and cares of our friends; their wants and cares are our own, because of the deep tenderness of mingled being. True love never condescends, because it casts away the assertion of authority in the sweetness of

sympathy. It is not that we must understand the mystery of God's being aright, or he will hate us ; but that, whether we believe or disbelieve, God will be faithful—faithful as dear friends are faithful, without the shadow of offended pride. It is not that after one approved fashion we must honour his glory, otherwise his wrath will fall ; but that his glory is in our redemption, and, like the light, falls upon us whether we are blind, or whether we discern its grace. We may hide ourselves from the light of day, but the light is upon the world. We may deny God's love ; we cannot destroy it. It is not that the Lord has enacted certain determined conditions, and is ready to receive us, those terms accepted : while, those terms rejected, he will crush us beneath his feet ; but that above all conditions his tenderness is seeking out our souls, and striving for their blessedness. True, faithful, devoted love strikes no bargain, and is fettered with no scheme of grace ; beyond and above conditions it seeks its own, and dies upon its cross with a prayer for the pardon of

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its foes. This alone is the perfect love that casteth out fear. Do we still doubt ? I have yet another hope : I know that I hide God's love from my heart, and that it must be greater than I can understand. The child knows not its parent's watching love, the anxiety never relaxing its keen care, the constant planning for its health and peace and joy ; and there is a love of God around us greater than our discernment, simply because we are his children.

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

I PROPOSE to ask you to go down with me to the foundations, with this question—Where are we to find the ultimate and permanent authority in matters pertaining to religion ?

Assuredly, in the sphere of religious and theological thought, this is the one great question of our time. We are surrounded by a multitude of conflicting churches, a mob of antagonistic guides, a jungle of contradictory creeds ; and it is a difficult matter to know where to go, what to trust, or whom to believe. I do not wonder at anyone who gets confused ; and I should think it a cruel injustice to condemn anyone who, in such circum-

stances, is utterly without a faith altogether. But, at the same time, a condition of unbelief or the absence of belief is not a desirable one, is not a healthy one, is not a natural one. We ought to feel the rock beneath our feet, we ought to have our thoughts about the greatest and most momentous of all subjects : and, if possible, we ought to be clear about the ultimate authority on matters pertaining to religion.

That this state of mind, that this attitude of belief, is natural to us may be proved from the one fact, that mankind, with absolute eagerness, accepts almost the first claimant to authority. Hence the power of the priesthood, the influence of the Church, and the mighty hold of the Bible. It is as natural for man to fall back upon authority as it is for him to fall back upon belief in a God. Sooner than be without a God, he will chop out an idol from a log of wood ; and sooner than be without an authoritative guide, he will grovel before a priest, lay down his conscience before a pope, or give

up his reason to a book. It is surely then a great and necessary undertaking—to find out, if possible, the true authority, the highest and surest standard of appeal.

I pass by a crowd of eccentricities—here a creed and there a sect, here a fanatic and there a devotee, assuming to be the confidant of the Eternal and the depositary of his perfect will; and I see five principal claimants for the kingly throne from which reason, conscience, will, the affections and the life are to be ruled. These are—the Pope, the Church, the Reformers, the Bible, and the Living Soul. Which of these should a wise man choose to be, in religious matters, his ‘guide, philosopher, and friend’? Let us look a little at each of their claims.

The Pope

The pope is a man who asserts that he is the vicar of Christ, the mouthpiece of Deity, the channel of heavenly grace for earthly needs: and the best proof that this assertion appeals to deep human

needs is that millions believe it with their whole heart and soul: and it must be admitted that there is something attractive in this theory of a divine official, endowed with such authority and power. If one could only believe it, it does seem to end in a most complete way all our differences, doubts and dangers. What more satisfactory than to have an infallible authority who can always tell you what is true—the mouthpiece of God, the substitute for Christ, the depositary of the ark of salvation? Timid people, anxious people, superstitious people, sentimental people, intensely logical and very stupid people, all alike may find this papal theory of authority satisfactory. The timid find it good to creep into an ark of safety from the conflict of opinion; the anxious find peace in laying their burden down before a father in God; the superstitious know not how to resist the fascination of so great a claim so gravely asserted; the sentimental are satisfied with the poetic charm of the fancy that we have really in our midst a messenger from the skies;

the logical find in it the legitimate outcome of the commonly-received doctrine of a supernatural revelation ; and the stupid are deluded into simply losing their heads in the presence of a claimant from heaven. Between them, the Catholic Church gets a strong following ; and the pope is not likely to want for disciples and devotees.

But when we face this gigantic and ancient claimant, and examine his tremendous assertion that he is the lord of the conscience in God's stead, and the infallible promulgator of infallible truth, we do not find even the show of justification we might expect. The astonishing thing is that so little ground should exist for such a mighty claim, and we are forced to the conclusion that it has been based upon a clever estimate of the needs and possibilities of poor human nature rather than upon sober facts.

The one great assertion that lies at the root of the papacy is that the pope is the successor of St. Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as his vicar upon earth. But, in the first

place, it has never been made out, and it never can be made out, that Jesus ever intended to leave Peter behind as his vicar ; it has not and it cannot be made out that Jesus ever could have done any such thing, even though he had wished it ; it has not and it cannot be made out that Peter could have had any successor in such an office even though he had that office, still less that he could have had successors throughout all time ; it has not and it cannot be made out that the popes have been his successors ; and, finally, it has not and it cannot be made out that Peter could guarantee, to the men and women of the present day, the infallibility of an Italian theologian, with a majority of votes, after a series of wrangles and conspiracies. Granted that Jesus appointed Peter to be his vicar ; granted that he could have and did have successors ; granted even that the present pope could make his credentials clear, it would still be necessary to show how this could guarantee his integrity or wisdom : and this is what I hold never can be done.

Show me the pope at one end and Peter at the other : count every link from first to last, and what have you done? At the best, you have only demonstrated a physical connexion, an historical continuity. You have done absolutely nothing to establish the transmission of any moral or spiritual authority. It is all as arbitrary and unnatural as anything could be.

No ! the popes have been as varied in their characters and their values as the kings, and have supplied some of the shadiest tyrants, some of the clumsiest rulers, some of the dullest politicians, and a majority of the most impracticable teachers Europe has ever known.

No ; it is impossible for any rational person, outside of the charmed circle, to acknowledge the supremacy and authority of the pope.

The Church

The claim of the Church is only a variation of the papal claim. In the Catholic Church, and in what is called

the High Church in England, the Church is presented as a mystical body, endowed with the grace of God in a miraculous manner, so that it is the permanent channel of his saving mercy. Out of it there is no salvation, or no certainty of it. Its sacraments are supernaturally efficacious in the saving of the soul, and its priests are the real mediators between God and man. But, when you get to the essence of this theory of the authority of the Church, you find it resolves itself into the theory of the authority of the priest. He is a kind of pope in miniature : by the magic waters of baptism, he charms away the taint of original sin ; he works miracles for diseased and sinking souls ; he hears confessions and grants absolution or imposes penance ; he converts bread and wine into the body and blood of God ; he announces the will of the Almighty, and assumes to have in his keeping both the word of God and the mind of man.

Now, all the tendencies and weaknesses of poor human nature that lead to the

success of the claims of the pope lead to the success of the claims of the priest : and, as a matter of fact, the doctrine of the authority of the priest is making enormous way in the Established Church of England itself. 'The Church,' of which they speak, is a mere fiction, a figment, a mystical nonentity ; the real thing is the authority of the priests who constitute the Church for which such claims are made.

But here, again, the whole structure is built upon an absolutely arbitrary assumption. As a matter of fact, the Church is a purely political institution. In England it is the outcome of an Act of Parliament ; and an Act of Parliament could reduce it to the level of the Congregational Union. All else is the merest assertion, with nothing to support it but a tradition derived from the Romish Church which denies its authority and scouts its claims.

Besides, all the world knows that the Established Church in England is hopelessly divided—that school against school, and party against party, daily threaten

to make even formal unity impossible. How can there be authority where there is no agreement ? Is it to be Low Church or High, Romish or Rationalist ? What nonsense to talk of the Church as an authority, when its priests cannot meet together without revealing their hopeless confusion ; when the chief use of the Church Congress is to show that the creeds mean nothing in particular, and that solemn engagements are only an empty form !

What, then, can we say to our English priests but this :—You are only men like ourselves ; you are the bearers of no credentials from heaven that we can see ; you are like the rest of us, in needing to consider, in falling into error, in making blunders, even in committing sins ; and we see no reason whatever for giving over to you our heads, our consciences, or our souls. You may teach us if you like, you may persuade us if you can ; but we cannot see any reason for believing that the all-wise God has appointed you to be the custodians of his saving mercy, and the sole announcers of his will.

A third claimant for authority appears in the **Reformers**. To these men we are directly or indirectly indebted for the various modern Creeds, Articles, Confessions, and Catechisms, which have imposed upon Christendom the audacious tyranny of men who, having taken freedom for themselves, attempted to deny it to others. At the same time, it is only fair to the reformers to say that they are not altogether responsible for the despotism of the Creeds. It is true they wrote them or caused them to be written, but it was their followers, their descendants, who put the handcuffs on.

But the men who compiled the thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Confession of Faith, for instance, did not intend to be spiritual and intellectual tyrants. They thought they were only putting into systematic form the various infallible doctrines of Christian theology: and they had a perfect right to do this, just as they had a perfect right to break away from the Catholic Church and to become protesters or protestants, or to dissent and

to become dissenters. But, while they had a perfect right to leave the Church of Rome, or to dissent from the Established Church of England, or to draw up and publish their own Creed, they had no right to bind their successors ; they had no right to draw a line and say : ' We have gone so far but you shall go no farther : we used our freedom and came to these conclusions, but you must not be free to come to any other conclusions : we asserted our right to freedom of thought and freedom of action, and you may do the same, but only on the condition that you do not pass beyond the limits attained by us ! ' How monstrous all that sounds !—how monstrous it is ! And yet when we who are heretics—when we who are no longer able to abide by Luther and Calvin and Knox—revise their conclusions, and form our own beliefs, we are only acting on principles that justified them in doing what they did ; we are only repeating the process they thought right. If we are wrong, they were wrong ; if we are rebels, so were they ; if we are schismatics,

they were the same ; if we are heretics, what were they in relation to the Church they left, and the Creed they denied ? I tell you, the truest descendants of the reformers are the men who are for reform now ; who still apply their principles and act on their plans. The sons of the reformers are not the men who sit round their graves, or lounge in their libraries, clinging to the very words they left behind, and swearing never to know any truths but theirs—these are not the true sons of the reformers, but indolent mimics, dull slaves, or preposterous devotees. The true sons of the reformers are the men who, with their daring, and with their love of truth, act in their spirit and follow their example, and who are resolved to push on the work of reformation, wheresoever it may lead.

The Bible

We come now to the Bible ; and here tens of thousands would make a stand, though they would go with us in repudiating the final authority of the pope, the

priest, the church, or the reformers. They would say : ' The Bible is the Word of God, and must be true ; and, whether we understand it or not ; like it or not, it must be believed.' Now one thing must be observed here—a very simple and very obvious thing, but a thing very widely forgotten. It is this—that the Bible is, in no proper sense, a book at all. It is a collection of books bound up together. It is a kind of miniature library. Its various portions were written at intervals, during, say, from a thousand to fifteen hundred years, and by men of very different mental insight and moral power. It consists of history, biography, psalmody, prophecy, and what, in general terms, we may call literature of a personal kind. As might be expected, then, the various books are neither consistent with one another nor of equal value. The very picture presented of God himself (who is said to be the author of it all), differs in the different books. Its chronology is altogether inconsistent with the scientific exposition of the age of man and the

world ; its science from first to last is woefully wrong ; its history is occasionally childish and usually inaccurate ; even its morality is often bad, while some of its views of God are as impious and horrible as others are beautiful and sublime. At any rate, no one can read the Bible with anything like carefulness without coming to the conclusion that, whatever it is, it is not a consistent whole.

How then can such a production be called, in any reasonable sense, ‘ the Word of God ’ ? It is indeed said that God, from time to time, revealed truth as men were able to receive it, and that this accounts for the various lights and shades in the Bible. But this is no explanation. If revelations rose no higher than the human level, why reveal at all ? Why should God miraculously interpose, to reveal inaccuracies ? Why should he supernaturally inspire men to blunder ? Why should he specially commission men to paint a grossly deformed picture of himself ? Read the Book of Joshua, and ask whether it is likely that the God of

Jesus would inspire anyone to write that as descriptive of him. If miraculous and supernatural inspiration is affirmed, it would have been as easy for God to inspire men to write the perfect truth as to write incoherent or inconsistent error. What right have we, then, to charge upon a perfect God the faults of imperfect men? Had we not better fall back upon the reasonable and the really obvious explanation that the various writers of the books of the Bible did their best as fallible men, and that the Bible contains the results of their thoughts, feelings and beliefs on the subjects upon which they wrote? Then the Bible becomes a perfectly plain book, an honest book, and an exceedingly valuable book. Then we are not compelled to force all its statements to agree, or to invent unnatural reconcilements between the word in the book and the fact in the world: and then, above all, we are freed from the incubus of an imaginary authority which has only been the cause of division, trouble, and strife.

Yes! what has this imaginary final

authority done? Has it been an authority? Has it united mankind? Has it even united the Christian Church? The fact is notorious that the Bible has split us into fragments; and simply because it is not a consistent whole. One man proves one thing from it, another another, till the splitting process makes us ridiculous even to the heathen. It is plain, then, that the Bible simply cannot be the ultimate authority, and it ought to be equally plain that if God had intended to give us such an authority, he would have sent us a very different book; at all events he would have sent us a consistent book.

The Living Soul

There remains only one other possible authority—I have called it the living soul. By that I mean nearly the same thing as that which Emerson called the ‘over-soul’—that vast, living, moving, inspiring, progressive spirit which is leading us all on to light, wisdom, and truth. Part of that living soul is in the outward world.

It is in the glory of the sun, in the beauty of the clouds, in the mystery of the stars, in the throb of the sea and the flow of the river, in the loveliness of mountain, meadow and wood, in the harmony of the seasons. But chiefly it is in man himself : for man's own soul is the audience chamber of the Eternal. From that soul have sprung all religions, all bibles, all churches, all creeds : and it is to that soul of man we must appeal to revise all religions, to explain all bibles, to remodel all churches, to reconstruct all creeds. Why should you surrender yourself to what came from the human soul hundreds or thousands of years ago, when the living soul is yours to-day ?

That voice of the soul, I call *God*. And so it is. We are the children of God, and our good Father is speaking to us and in us. Men, in their blindness, go wandering up and down for an authority, or bow down to the first strong claimant they encounter ; and yet, all the while, God himself is speaking to them ; and, if they would listen to him, all things

would become clear. The theologians pore over what Calvin wrote, or over what Knox said ; or compel their disciples to fill their vessels with such oil as can be scraped from old confessions of faith, and to feed on the chaff of well-threshed texts—but give me the glimpse of God you can gain through a mother's love, and let the soul of the pure in heart be the window through which I see the Eternal.

This is the Light which, as the New Testament says, more or less enlightens every man that cometh into the world ; and our great business is to respect that Light, to increase its pure and steady glow, and to guard it from defilement or eclipse. It is the inward guide which God has given to us, and it were blasphemy against both our Maker and ourselves to neglect or misuse it.

To you who are perplexed and of doubtful mind, then, in these days of conflict and uncertainty, I say—Try what trusting to the Living Soul will do : try whether God will not speak to you there. Do what prophets and psalmists did ; do

what Jesus and the Apostles did—believe in God, the Living God, for yourself. Try all doctrines by the touchstone of pure thought, devout feeling, and religious trust. Believe nothing on any outward authority, but compel all to submit to the test of reason, conscience, and love. Believe only because you feel, approve, and know ; believe like happy children, not like submissive slaves. So shall you be truly free ; and, within yourself, you will have the witness that what you hold by is from God.

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF SUNDAY ¹

THE subject of Sunday seems coming up again—and indeed it is likely to do. Sunday work, Sunday reading, Sunday amusements—this restless modern life, so full of eager interests, keeps challenging every restriction in the laying out of our days. It is not Sunday only; you cannot lay out your life on any sort of plan, you cannot arrange an hour for a committee or an evening for a Shakespeare reading, but something else is sure to come clamouring for that very time! But especially Sunday! Because, you know, Sunday has come down to us fenced round with so many and such very rigid restrictions, that once having put these aside, it has seemed as if there was

¹ Reprinted from *Anchors of the Soul*, Discourses by the late Dr. Brooke Herford.

no clear reason for excluding anything. Indeed, it seems to me it has been discussed on that negative side, of what one must not do on Sunday, long enough—and I want to consider it on the other side, of what is the best use of it. How to make the best of Sunday. I think few people realize how important a question it is. Few realize its proportion in the laying out of life. Look at it in that light for a moment. Think what it means in this busy eager world, in which, all through the week, almost every man's time is given up to some enforced necessity of toil; think what it is that, after all, by this institution of Sunday, one-seventh of even the busiest man's whole time and life is his own, at his own disposal. One-seventh of life—ten solid years of the life of anyone who lives to the threescore years and ten. What a boon! What an opportunity! Is such a slice of precious life to be treated as if it didn't really matter what is done with it? Is it to be left as a sort of no man's land of time, to be occupied or not occupied, just as things

may chance ; to be left to slip away without plan or purpose ? Surely that is a pity ! And yet that is the way with too many at present. They simply have not any clear thought or purpose for their Sundays. They have a few ideas about what should not be done, but as to what should, the Sundays come and are got through, very much as the passing inclination may determine. If what the inclination points to is challenged by anyone, the answer is ready : ' What is there wrong ? Where is the sin of it ? ' Well, there may be nothing actually wrong, and yet, a man's Sundays may slip away so as to have nothing to show for them, so as to do him very little good, and even so as to be almost total loss and waste on the large view of life. I tell you this is a big question—this ' how to make the best of Sunday.'

How to get at the true answer ? Should it not be something like this : by considering what are the elements of a true, wholesome, happy life which the six busy days are most apt to leave

unsupplied, and then to lay out Sunday to supply these missing elements? And as I look at the busy high-pressure life of people the week through, as I see what is the common race of work, and the common race of pleasure, there do seem to be three great elements of life sadly left out.

I put as the first thing of all, simple rest and change. I do not say it is the highest thing, but it lies at the root of the whole matter. We want to get out of that groove in which the pressure of life keeps most of us. If I were asked to put in a single sentence a good practical rule for Sunday, I would say: put aside both life's common work and common pleasures. Rest—and change is one form of rest—rest is a beautiful, divine thing—rest for the weary body, rest for the worried mind. Why, it was rest that was the whole of the earliest sabbath idea. 'Remember the sabbath day'—you see the earliest command we have was a reminder of something earlier still. 'Remember the sabbath to keep it holy,' did not mean to keep it as a day of religion, but to keep

its rest very sacredly. It got used as an opportunity for religious uses, because it had such leisure for them, but the original idea was simply rest. It was the enforced institution of rest as a very sacred part of life. And the more anyone wants to go back to the old Jewish 'sabbath,' the more it is simply rest. The real 'sabbath-breaker' in the literal, ancient meaning is the rest-breaker, anyone who infringes, without the strongest need, upon life's ordered rest-times or holidays. The worst sabbath-breaker in these modern days is not the business man who does something specially secular on Sunday, but the business man or woman who keeps employ  s working overtime without the most pressing necessity; the shopkeeper, who after joining in the half-holiday or early closing movement, nibbles half an hour or an hour off it. But still, even when all this is kept right for ordinary days, life is often very hard and busy, and what is left from work is often claimed by society for pleasures and amusements which are almost as exhausting—and the

first need for Sunday is, to have all that strain of common work and occupation lifted clear off from life. Have nothing to do with Sunday work. So, as far as you can, keep off even the thoughts of business. There was sense in the old Puritans who would not even talk business on Sunday. Of course, I don't put it as a sin. I put it as one of those follies in which little leads to more, until life's great institution of rest is sapped and spoiled. Be thankful that in London, the busiest centre of English life, you do not have your letters on the Sunday—especially as they are even now arranging for the delivery of very special ones. In all the great cities of America there is no Sunday delivery, and though you can have your letters on applying for them at the post office, very few do so. A busy American once talked to me about having one of his clerks bring up his mail to him each Sunday morning, and asked if I would call him a sabbath-breaker? 'No,' I said, 'I should call you an idiot!'

And the same thing applies to you

young people and children. Are not you in business? Certainly you are. Your business is learning—and a pretty serious business, too, to judge by what I hear of the hard work that young people have to take home, and of the ‘grinding’ they have to do to keep a good place. And sometimes a good deal of this is left over for Sunday. Well, of course there is no sin in it, but it is a pity, for it is a bad, mischievous thing to be bent over lessons, hour by hour on the day which should be the rest-day of the week. It is just as foolish as for a business man to be balancing his books. And I am the more earnest in speaking against it because it is the good ones who do it; it is the hard workers; it is those who want to get the very most out of their education, and to have an honourable place. It is the very ones, both in school and college, who are most likely to break down, by and by, from over-pressure. ‘Overwork’ it is called, but I believe that, nine times out of ten, it does not arise from overwork so much as from working wrongly and

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unhealthily, and especially from not taking care to keep this good solid rest and getting out of the groove, every Sunday.

Then next to simple rest and change—which is the fundamental use of Sunday—comes its opportunity for home life and family life. How sadly this is often lacking, especially to those whose strained and busy days most need it. Home should be the very heart of life, and a large part of life's inspiration and motive. It mostly is, when the home is first started—that first cosy nest that the two young people make together: how all their new life centres there. But, by and by, life's needs increase, and the strain of providing for them increases, too. Perhaps success, with its enlarging responsibility, takes hold of the man, and he cannot be home so soon, or thinks he cannot; and when he is at home he has brought his business with him, and if he does not talk of it, he thinks of it. I do not say it can always be otherwise from day to day—but still recognize that it is so, and that, so, many

a busy man goes on for years, till he hardly knows his own children—knows them, I mean, in any real loving companionship. And it need not be so, if he will only make the best of Sunday. Here is a great, full day, from morning to night, once a week, all your own. All your own for your home and your family—and they too at liberty also—the work put away, and the lessons put away, and all ready for the brightest, happiest time together. Is not that an opportunity ?

Mrs. Beecher Stowe, in one of her little stories, represents some model family as even getting up a little earlier on Sunday mornings, on the ground that such a day is worth making even more of than the common days. I can't go as far as that ! Rest, still—first of all—and that extra hour on Sunday is very sweet. Only let that later hour be kept to. No lounging down at half a dozen different times ! Let the Sunday begin with what should be the key-note of it all through—all the family happily together. I think some of the happiest times in a true home should

be the meal times, bringing all together after all their separate tasks and ways. But most days, in many busy households, the meals have to be a more or less broken, hurried time. It should be different on the Sunday. And all through, on Sunday, let these two ideas, rest and family life, go hand in hand.

But now, if rest is the foundation, and happy family life the staple, I must still put as the highest, crowning opportunity of Sunday, its opportunity of worship and of all religious and higher culture. Mark, why: not because Sunday is a specially holy day; not because it is our duty to be Christians that day, more than any other; least of all from any idea that a little religion on Sunday will compensate for a week of worldliness; but simply because that element is, after all, the highest side of man's life, and other days it is sadly apt to be crowded out, and this day, by the wise tradition of the past, place is distinctly assigned to it, and it comes fairly before us, with leisure for it, and opportunity for it, and companionship in it.

Friends, I put it to you, that it is a terrible mistake to treat this religious element in life as something of no particular consequence, and which may be left to any slack, occasional use or service to which you may feel inclined. You know the value of religion in the broader life of mankind. You know that among the influences which make nations it is one of the most potent factors. You know that a city, with its churches, and all that they stand for, wiped out, would be a poorer, meaner place. And do you think, any of you, that *you* can evade this truth, and leave religion out, or leave it to others, and yet your life be all the same and all right? You cannot! Set it down to professionalism if you will—but I counsel you with all the power that is in me, to plan out some part of every Sunday to the great functions and charities of religion. It is not a matter of spending some large portion of Sunday in multiplied attendances at church. One good service for all would be my ideal, if all could be present at one time—that

anyhow, as far as possible, and this in the morning, while the heart is fresh, to give the key-note of a music of earnest thought that should last and linger in the heart through all the day. Feel what a great thing it is—this simple worship of ours. I do not decry even the world's gorgeous idolatries, and pomps of ritual and priest-craft—they are all the various ways in which the sense of God, and the obligation to his will, have shaped themselves out among men—but especially I think we should cherish with a great thankfulness and joy, this simple thought of ours, of all gathering together to the dear Father-spirit, and trying to realize his presence in these plain, quiet ways, and of hymn and prayer and the old Bible words! Oh, I think we should come together to this, as life's sacreddest engagement; I think we should uphold it as a strong institution, not just supporting it, but putting into it our best manhood and womanhood and making it what it has in it to be—the strong bond and rallying point of that finer, upward looking life among men.

With a strong centre and backing of worship in it, if you only keep that up with real interest and power, I am not much afraid of Sunday being spoiled or lost in the more varied freedom and interest of modern life. For these two things—home companionship and worship—will set the key-note of the day to something of a higher and quieter strain than life's common holidays. 'Sunday,' says Emerson, 'invites you to the noblest solitude and the noblest society.' You may not always be able to have these, but at least *try* for them. Let these be what you provide for. If *that* be the uplook of the day, the lesser questions will take care of themselves.

Some years ago, the experiment was tried by the *New York Herald*, which undertook to supply London with the most enterprising sort of Sunday paper. Well, it was an absolute failure; not because the London public became suddenly smitten with sabbatarianism, but simply because people did not want it. The very object which it proclaimed, 'to

carry on the week's doings in an unbroken fashion,' is exactly what is not wanted. People want the break, not in mere work, but in thought, and subject, and interest. That was how it struck me, specially in America. There the Sunday newspaper is an established institution. I was familiar with it for eighteen years; and it was not a matter of Sunday work—all the work on it was finished on Saturday evening. But the real effect of it was in making Sunday a cheaper, commoner thing—something less of a general rest-day; people didn't get out of the groove. So, now, I should be sorry if the Sunday newspaper became a general thing, not because there is any sin in it, but because the day is too good to be cheapened down, and lowered to the poor level at which the work and worry of the world are apt to keep us six days out of seven.

And so with other questions which keep coming. Is Sunday bicycling and golfing wrong? No, of course not—but all the same Edward Everett Hale was right in the caution he gave to a great bicycle

club in Boston once. They had asked him to address them because of his well-known sympathy with all free, wholesome, manly and womanly life, Sundays and all days—and of course he spoke warmly for this—but, all the same, he said, ‘only remember that when you young gentlemen organize your cycling to spend your Sundays in great excursions, you are saying, as plainly as words can say, that so far as you are concerned you do not mean that the next generation shall have any Sunday.’ So is Sunday golf wrong ? Is Sunday tennis wrong ? And, of course, if anyone will argue it merely as a question of what is absolutely forbidden and sinful, there will be some who will argue for football and cricket matches, with quite as good reason, from the point of view of their preferences. Yes ; but if you will simply argue it so, and act out your own particular preference to the fullest—it is simply saying, as Dr. Hale put it, that you do not want there to be any Sunday ! For it is just the difference, which rules out these things, and makes Sunday a

quiet, restful day, a little different from common holidays—it is that which made Sunday, and which keeps it on.

I know that it is more and more impossible to draw absolute lines, but that only makes it wise and right to draw one's own lines well on the right side of whatever would tend to cheapen or destroy the old convention of a universal, quiet rest-day.

So, put away both life's common work and common amusements, and all this not because in the things put away there is some mysterious iniquity of sabbath-breaking, but because we want Sunday for life's best uses.

It is the higher side of life which has given us Sunday, and is the solid force that keeps it going. Still keep it, in its main character use, for that higher side of life, not in worship only, but in all quiet, thoughtful living, ever facing towards the good. And the Sunday shall be no day of grim restraint or weary listlessness, but the sweetest, purest, happiest day of all the seven, and the helper, strengthener, sanctifier of the rest.

UNITARIANISM AN AFFIRMATIVE FAITH

AN Affirmative Faith : is that a true description of Unitarianism ? I want to show you that it is. And I have chosen this subject because I am persuaded that a large amount of misapprehension prevails, and that the form of faith which I myself have found above all things helpful and inspiring, satisfying at once the questionings of the reason and the yearnings of the heart, strengthening my will and quickening my spiritual life, is connected in the minds of many people with the thought of doubt and negation, a faith bare and cold, a theology attenuated and pared down to the smallest dimensions, denying a great deal and asserting very little. Those who go by the name of Unitarians have been so often described,

either wilfully or ignorantly, as a set of infidels, not believing in the Bible, denying Jesus Christ, and next door to Atheists, that ill-informed people who never inquire for themselves believe these misrepresentations to be sober facts, and now and then evince not a little surprise to find that these dangerous heretics, after all, use the same Bible, reverence the same great Teacher, and worship God just as their fellow-Christians do. And even men who ought not to be ill-informed have so carelessly adopted popular misunderstandings that they constantly speak of Unitarianism in the same strain.

Now, believing as I do that this Unitarian Christianity is specially adapted to the religious wants of our time, that if it were more widely known we should hear less of secularism and atheism, that there would be less bigotry and intolerance in the churches, that men would think more of living pure, upright, devout lives and less of insisting on this or that particular creed, that the world would be every way better and happier; I feel

bound to do what in me lies to clear away this ambiguity and misconception and to proclaim what I know from my own experience to be true—that Unitarianism, so far from being a piece of cold intellectual philosophy, is a warm, living faith ; so far from being a belief in very little, is a belief in the very largest truths ; so far from being a negative religion, is a strongly affirmative one ; and that if, as we are sometimes told, it be only one step removed from Atheism, that is a step which would take a man from the firm rock of religious confidence over into the deepest sea of doubt and despair.

It is not, however, very wonderful that these misconceptions should have arisen. It has constantly fallen to the lot of Unitarians to controvert popular doctrines which seemed to them false and mischievous. They were bound to do it, if they would be faithful to the truth that was in them ; and they have thus appeared before the world time after time as the deniers of this or that orthodox dogma ; and the world has heard a great deal

about what they do not believe and hardly anything at all about what they do believe. But if you will take the trouble to examine any doctrine which Unitarians have denied, you will find that that doctrine was itself a denial, a limitation of some larger truth, a barrier to some wider thought ; and that in denying the denial, in withstanding the limitation, in breaking down the barrier, Unitarians have been engaged in what is really a constructive, not a destructive work, in maintaining an affirmation, in asserting that God's truth and love are large and many-sided, and that his commandment is 'exceeding broad.'

At the outset, we affirm with, I think, greater emphasis than any other Protestant Church, the right of every man to think for himself, and to trust the intellect and affections, the conscience and spiritual instinct with which God has entrusted him. Our faculties are given to us by God ; and to exercise them in all matters, to test all subjects by them, to make them the last court of appeal in all doubts

and difficulties, is at all times our bounden duty. To make over our right of private judgment to pope or priest, church or creed, is to sell our most precious birth-right. The mind should be absolutely free; and to attempt to fetter it is to commit high treason against our human nature. We will bow down, therefore, to no external authority as supreme; we will be hampered by no foregone conclusions which must be adhered to; we will have no creeds, no shibboleths, no articles of faith. Our church is free. No man is asked any question as to his belief. He is only asked to be earnest in good works. We hesitate even to define our faith; we are so determined that no one shall be hindered in any way from trusting his own God-given faculties. Thus our freedom is not a negation; it is something more than the mere absence of restraint. It is the positive and strong affirmation of the trustworthiness of our mental and spiritual powers and the resolve to use them, improve them, and obey them. And this is a very grand affirmation indeed.

The word 'Unitarian' has been often supposed to show that our faith is a negative one—that we are united simply by our denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. But this is a mistake. It is quite true that Unitarian does not mean simply a believer in the Unity of God. A Trinitarian believes in the Unity of God, too. There is no question whatever about the Divine Unity. But there is a question as to the Divine Personality. Trinitarianism affirms that the Personality is threefold; and in so doing denies that it is undivided, or divided in any other proportion. Unitarianism affirms that that Personality is one and undivided; and in so doing denies that it can be partitioned off into three or any other number of parts. Each term negatives the other, but only because it makes a counter assertion. Unitarianism is, therefore, an affirmation as much as Trinitarianism, and I venture to say that it is by far the grander and plainer affirmation of the two. The doctrine of the Trinity is not only mysterious; it is unintelligible. The doctrine

of 'One God, the Father,' is clear as the day. And it is a grand doctrine, because it is in harmony with all the hints we can gather from science. Every new research, every new investigation into the secrets of the earth or sky, every fresh discovery in the realm of natural law, points unmistakably to a great unity of will. But without going into any arguments for or against the doctrine of the Trinity, I am contented with our affirmation that God is one and only one, simply on the ground that it is the most reverent assertion we can make, and that to divide his awful Being in any way seems to me a piece of almost impious presumption. To say that God is one, is to make the simplest, and, indeed, the only intelligible, statement you can make about him. But though my thought of God is simple, it is neither poor nor vague. I am not a Deist, because I am not satisfied with the conception of God as a being who, ages ago, set the world going, just as a man would wind up a clock, and who has left it to itself ever since. I am not a Pantheist, because I

cannot be satisfied with a theory of religion which makes the universe co-extensive with God, merges the human in the Divine, and leaves no separate individuality, either to God or man. I believe in God the Father, perfect in justice, infinite in love. Him I believe to be a living God, not a past Creator only, but immanent in the world to-day: a living Person, if I may use the word; not a dead fate or an unconscious Force, but One to whom I can pray and who will answer me; to whom I can give my love, and who will love me again. All the might of religion I hold to lie in this personal relationship between the Father in heaven and his children on earth.

Then, too, I believe that Unitarians affirm the perfect righteousness and boundless love of God with a strength equalled by no other church. Others, of course, declare God's goodness and tender mercy, but not consistently. In the same breath they speak of his unending wrath, or of his anger which can only be averted by an unjust atonement, or even of his

selecting a few of his children for salvation and countless millions for everlasting damnation. But we, I think, without limitation or exception, affirm unswervingly the unchanging goodness, infinite tenderness, and boundless compassion of God. And we find that thought itself, almost all the religion a man needs, giving us confidence in every perplexity, comfort in every sorrow, and strength for all the battling of life.

There is nothing negative, then, about our belief in God: what shall we say about our belief in Jesus Christ? We deny his deity? Yes; because we make the far grander affirmation of his humanity. I do not want now to discuss the whole doctrine of the deity of Jesus. Suffice it to say that it is both unscriptural and unintelligible. The Gospels know nothing of the Godhead of Christ. His disciples knew nothing of it. The Jews knew nothing of it. The whole thing was an afterthought—a mistaken attempt to glorify a life that could not possibly be made more glorious than it was. The real

life of Jesus never suggested to those who witnessed it any such thought ; and when the doctrine of his deity did arise, the theologians were put to the most curious shifts to explain how it was that so stupendous a fact, if a fact, was not revealed during Jesus' lifetime.

And the doctrine is unintelligible ; because it is almost as impossible to believe that in the one person of Jesus there were two natures, as it is to believe that in the one nature of God there are three persons, unless, like Tertullian, you simply ' believe because it is impossible.' The doctrine only ends in making the sweetest, most helpful life that was ever lived on earth an incomprehensible juggle and enigma. And this is where I feel the grandeur of the Unitarian affirmation. Jesus, the tempted, suffering, loving, praying man ! Jesus, true brother of our own, tempted like as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, persecuted, forsaken, sick at heart, but victorious at last through faith and prayer ! Jesus, carrying the same weight of care and woe which burdens us,

buffeting the same strong waves, treading the same thorny path, wrestling with the same allurements to sin, yet in all things more than conqueror ! Jesus, saving men by the might of his example, triumphantly winning men's hearts by the sheer force of conquering goodness ! I venture to say that that is one of the mightiest, noblest, most helpful thoughts that any man can think. It is a simpler, but an infinitely more exalted and more potent conception than that of Christ a demi-god, whose footsteps it were utterly vain for us to attempt to tread. Break in upon the simple humanity of Christ and you destroy all that is grandest in his life—all the infinitive charm of its beauty, all the saving power of its strength ; you take away from his true dignity ; you rob him of his true glory. Of what service is his example ? What reality is left in his life of trial and sorrow, if all the while he was sustained by his own omnipotence ? How does it help you and me, in the darkness and care and sore temptation of our lives, to know that Jesus also sounded

the depths of sorrow and vanquished the thought of sin, if he were indeed very God of very God? Surely his life becomes an unreal piece of acting. I care not to know that a God can be tempted like as we are, and yet without sin. What I want to know is that man can; that there has actually lived upon this earth one who, with no weapons or armour that I cannot have too, has fought the fight of life and been victorious from beginning to end, has tasted all life's bitterness and never despaired, has experienced man's deepest cruelty, and never hated his persecutors, has been acquainted with untold grief and never lost for one moment his faith in God, has been tried as perhaps never man before or since, and has come out of his trial like silver purified in the refiner's fire. That is the thought to help me in my weakness, to console me in my sorrow, to sustain me in my difficulties, to lift me up and lead me on from earth to heaven, from myself to God. That is the real secret of the influence of Jesus in the world. That is the great truth

which has forced its way through the cramping metaphysics of the theologians and touched men's hearts in spite of the creeds ; yet Unitarians only consistently affirm it.

Now to come to another point ; it is not at all unusual to find people who will tell you that Unitarians 'do not believe in the Bible' : and it is a sort of revelation to them to learn that we read it regularly in our churches. What is at the bottom of this curious impression ? It is this : we deny the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. We deny that once upon a time, long years ago, God gave once for all, a full complete revelation of himself to man ; that he miraculously preserved that revelation within the covers of a certain book ; and that ever since that time he has ceased to reveal his truth to men. We deny that the Bible is an infallible and exclusive standard of truth. And we do this partly on critical grounds. A very slight acquaintance with Biblical criticism is sufficient to show that the Bible is a collection of books

of very different values and with a very small claim to infallibility ; that it must be received like other books, tested and interpreted as they are, and honoured for its own sake only and its intrinsic worth. This is the way in which scholars in almost all churches now treat the Bible. It is, I rejoice to say, no longer a peculiar feature of Unitarianism. Looked at in this light, the Bible ceases to be a kind of sibylline oracle and becomes a great reality, a history of the religious growth of one of the most religious peoples that ever dwelt upon the earth, a book containing some of the deepest yearnings, some of the loftiest aspirations, some of the noblest utterances of men ; above all, the record of all we know of the life and religion of the world's greatest teacher. We reverence it, therefore, with an honest, healthy reverence, and find it a storehouse of religious experience, from which we may draw forth great spiritual riches.

Well, but we do not believe in a final revelation of God in the Bible for another

reason : because we believe in a larger, universal, perennial revelation. The small, narrow doctrine, that God revealed himself once for all long centuries ago, and that ever since the wells of truth have been dry, is swallowed up in the larger affirmation that God reveals himself to the pure in heart from age to age ; that he is ever showing fresh truth to those who seek it, ever pouring fresh light on waiting eyes, ever watering thirsty souls with fresh streams of inspiration. We do not deny inspiration to prophet and psalmist ; but we refuse to limit it to them. We do not deny that there was a revelation in the first century, but we maintain that there is also a revelation in the present day. We cannot believe that God spoke once to a few favoured individuals and that all we can do is to catch the lingering echoes, and win truth second-hand. We say that if God spoke to men once, he will speak to men now ; that if Israel had her seers, so can England have hers ; that if Paul and Jesus heard the voice of God, so can you and I. There is no monopoly of

divine inspiration. Of course, I do not assert that it is given in equal measure ; but I say that some inspiration is within reach of every man who will open his heart to receive it ; that in all ages the listening ear has been able to catch some whisper of the divine voice. God is to us essentially a living God, an ever-present God, one whom we need not seek in the dim vistas of the past only, but who is as near to you and me in the streets of our town as he was to the prophets in Jewry ; one who has never left himself without a witness in the world. And so we believe in inspiration more, not less, than those who would limit it to a single period or a single race ; we believe in revelation more, not less, than those who would confine it within the covers of a single book.

The full grandeur of this doctrine of a universal and perennial revelation is only felt when one considers that it places the ground and basis of religious faith within the soul, instead of in a collection of writings ; thus removing it from an

outpost where it was always exposed to the attacks of science and criticism, and securing it within the impregnable citadel of the heart. I believe few of us know how much misery has been caused by the popular notion that religion itself must stand or fall with the infallibility of the Bible. On the one hand it has caused timid men to shut their eyes and call blindness faith; on the other it has driven many a brave, honest soul into the darkness of Atheism. Not until men see that religion can find a sure foundation only on the vision of divine realities granted when, now and again, the veil is lifted within the heart, and on the inward whisper of God's spirit heard when the soul is hushed in silent peace—will they believe that they need renounce neither reason nor religion, but may accept all that science has discovered or criticism proved and keep intact their faith in God. Our grand affirmation, then, that the same Divine Spirit which spoke to the holy men of old bears witness in seeking hearts to-day, goes with healing power

to the very root of our unbelief at the present time.

I might take up every point of our Unitarian theology in the same way and show that whenever we deny a popular dogma it is simply because it is excluded by some larger and wider affirmation. Do we deny the doctrine of what is commonly called 'original sin' ? It is because we affirm that God is perfectly just, and therefore will never impute to his children a guilt which is not their own. Do we deny the doctrine of election ? It is because we affirm that God is infinitely good, and therefore will never predestine his children to everlasting torment. Do we deny the orthodox doctrine of atonement ? It is again the affirmation of infinite love and justice which sweeps the doctrine away. We cannot believe that an infinitely just God will inflict on an innocent victim the punishment of other men's sins, or that an infinitely loving-hearted God will withhold forgiveness from any repentant child. The Lord's Prayer is not a mockery. As we in our highest

moments freely forgive one another, so will our Father in heaven freely forgive us. We refuse to think of God as an omnipotent Shylock, demanding every letter of his bond, because we prefer the grandeur of the assertion that 'God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great kindness.'

Again, do we deny the doctrine of eternal punishment? It is still because of that inexhaustible affirmation that 'God is love.' Punishment which is inflicted by a loving wisdom is reformatory, and proportioned to the guilt. . But infinite punishment for finite sin is neither one nor the other. There is neither reformation nor proportion. The doctrine, thank God, is fast losing ground; not, however, so much because Dean Farrar said that the Greek Testament never teaches it as because human hearts are better than human creeds. Men in various churches are beginning to realize in their hearts all the glory and meaning of the affirmation that God is love; and so they find it impossible to assent any longer to a

dogma which directly impugns God's love. It is not a matter of texts or interpretation. The dogma is dying, because perfect love must always cast out faithless fear.

I think, then, that I have said enough to show that I am justified in making the assertion that our religion is pre-eminently a religion of affirmations. Whether you agree with what I have said or not, you will at any rate grant that I have pointed to an affirmative faith. I can conceive nothing more misleading than the common assertion that Unitarians believe less than other Christians. In no sense is that assertion true, unless you measure the quantity of a man's belief by the number of articles in his creed. In that case we certainly believe very little, for creed we have none. But why have we no creed? Because creeds always hinder and never help the truth; because they cramp the mind and hold it in bondage instead of leaving it free to follow the leading of God's spirit; because they are the fruitful source of insincerity and evasion. We are without a creed, not

because we have no belief, but because no creed is large enough for our belief ; and not because our opinions are vague and indefinite, for I venture to say that there is more substantial agreement amongst us than there is amongst the members of the Church of England with all their creeds and articles. We quarrel with creeds because they give us too little to believe in, not too much ; and because we will not shut our doors to any fellow-Christian, but will leave every man to decide for himself whether he can profitably worship with us or not. A long creed does not make a large faith. Only believe, in all its height and depth and length and breadth, the one affirmation that God is Love, and all the creeds and articles of the Church of England or the Westminster Confession can add to it nothing. They can only limit it and narrow it down.

But possibly it will occur to you that these affirmations are not peculiar to Unitarian theology ; that they appear more or less clearly as the groundwork

of every creed ; that they are proclaimed more or less broadly and distinctly by clergymen of every denomination. I grant it ; and I maintain that this is the highest glory of my faith. It is just the living Christianity extracted from all the creeds. It is the faith common to the devoutest, largest minds in every Church. It contains all that is good in orthodoxy—it keeps hold of every powerful, helpful doctrine in a larger form. It drops only the restrictions. Strike off the fetters and limitations, abolish the metaphysical subtleties and mere theological speculations, take only the strong, clear, living religion, which is at the bottom of every creed, and you will find that that is Unitarianism pure and simple.

Which do you think is likely to be the more helpful faith—that which speaks to a man of the fear of hell, or that which wins him by the love of God ; that which threatens the sinner with pictures of divine wrath and endless suffering, or that which appeals to him by the unbounded compassion, the infinite patience,

the tender forgiveness of the Father in heaven? Which thought do you think is likely to be more helpful in the hour of trial or temptation—the thought of Jesus, a person of the Godhead, parading in mortal flesh, or that of Jesus, our brother, tempted like as we are, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Which theology do you think is more likely to quicken the aspiring soul—that which tells of a revelation completed and that God who once spoke is now silent, or that which tells of a daily revelation in pure and loving hearts of God whose voice can be heard in every listening soul? Which faith do you think is more likely to satisfy a thoughtful and inquiring age—that which shrinks from criticism and yields to science only when compelled, or that which welcomes new truth and new light, come from what quarter they may? Which religion is furthest from Atheism—that which is founded on a church or a book, or that which is built on the eternal witness of God in the hearts of his children?

I, for one, cannot doubt for an instant. Because I believe that love is mightier than fear ; because I hold that the thought of Jesus, the Man, is grander than that of Jesus, the God ; because I prefer to trust in the ever-present Spirit of God rather than in creeds and churches ; I cling to the larger faith and hold that it is mighty to help and to save men. It comforts my heart, it convinces my mind, it strengthens my will. It fills me with joy and gladness. It makes me strenuous in the battle with sin.

It is this large, free, most simple, most tender, most affirmative faith, which we are trying to establish and maintain. We want to build it up into a power strong enough to reach every doubting heart, to touch every hardened conscience, to stand, as we feel assured it can, against all the assaults of unbelief and sin. And we want all who are one with us in this purpose to join hands and help us.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

THE doctrinal statement that Jesus Christ 'was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,' is based upon the literature known as the New Testament ; or rather, upon a very small fragment thereof. Being an historical question, it would serve no useful purpose to debate upon it with anyone who refused to allow the history of the New Testament to be as scientifically and carefully and freely examined, as, say, Roman or Greek history.

NOTE—The writer disclaims any credit for originality. He has endeavoured to present in a condensed and popular form the results of modern criticism on this question and has laid freely under contribution many authorities. In particular, he records his indebtedness to Lobstein, 'The Virgin Birth of Christ.'

That it is not irreverent to thus treat the New Testament we have the authority of Dr. Ll. Davies, Vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale. Says he, in a collection of Essays entitled 'Spiritual Apprehension,' 'There can be no merit or piety in blinding ourselves; it cannot be disloyal or irreverent towards God to look with as searching a gaze upon the Bible and the Church as upon the natural creation'; that is to say, there is no more infidelity in Biblical Criticism than in Chemical Analysis.

To simplify discussion, let us fix in our minds its scope, by remembering that we are confined to the pages of the New Testament. The evidence of the Christian writers of the second century is of no value. If we were to admit that the testimony of that century is in favour of the Virgin Birth, yet have we to remember that the testimony is based on two of our Gospels: i.e., Matthew and Luke. The repetition of an incorrect statement after a lapse of years does not make true the untrue.

Let us then turn to the New Testament.

Two only of the four Gospels say anything about the Virgin Birth. The Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline literature, and the Johannine literature, know nothing of it. Not only so, but they affirm or imply that the father of Jesus was Joseph. In Acts 2³⁰ Peter is reported to have said, David being a prophet, knew 'that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne.' By this 'one' of course, Peter meant Jesus Christ. In Acts 13²³ Paul is made to say at Antioch, 'Of this man's (David's) seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.' The introduction to the letter to the Romans denotes a human origin of Jesus, 'born of the seed of David' (1³). Jesus' divine sonship is declared to be proved by the *Resurrection*; whilst in Gal. 4⁴, when Paul says 'When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,' the whole force of his argument is missed and shipwreck made of his theology if we take it that he meant by

‘born of a woman’ that Jesus had not a human father. If we turn to II Tim. 2⁸ we read, ‘Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David, according to my gospel.’

In the fourth Gospel, the writer in the account of the discourse with Nicodemus, puts in the mouth of Jesus a statement which is fatal to the doctrine: ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ In John 6⁴² we read, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?’ and in 1⁴⁵ Philip says, ‘We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, *the son of Joseph.*’ And yet, despite this ascription of Jesus’ purely human birth, Nathanael can exclaim, ‘Thou art the Son of God!’

Whether the writer of the Johannine literature knew of the story of the Virgin Birth is necessarily a matter of opinion; but not so whether he taught it, or anything reconcilable with it. He passes it over in silence, believing he had found

in the Logos theory a full explanation of the personality of Jesus.

So far we have found no trace of the Virgin Birth ; on the contrary have found affirmations inconsistent with it. There are left for examination only the first three Gospels.

It may be assumed that Jesus had some opinion on the matter of his parentage. Whatever opinion he had, the Gospels do not show that he ever made the slightest claim to a supernatural origin. Of the three Gospels, Mark is admittedly the oldest, representing most fully the primitive tradition. We can, however, dismiss it at once, for in it there is no sign or token of any kind that can be used in support of the doctrine the historicity of which we are examining.

Our investigation, therefore, is reduced to two Gospels, i.e., Matthew and Luke. But it is possible still further to limit the sources whence can be derived arguments in favour of the doctrine. Outside of the first two chapters in each Gospel there is no reference, direct or indirect,

to the Virgin Birth. On the contrary, whatever references there are as to Jesus' parentage, if we were to take the Bible up for the first time, knowing nothing concerning the Virgin Birth, and to tear out the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, there would be nothing left to bring to our minds the slightest notion of a Virgin Birth. Nay ! we should close the book with the firm conviction that Joseph was Jesus' father ; that Jesus' birth was natural ; and that he was born at Nazareth. Even if we take the second chapter of Luke, we read of his ' parents ' ; of their not understanding what he said to them in the temple ; and in 2⁴⁸ Mary says reproachfully, ' Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.' It is impossible to reconcile these things with the statement that Mary treasured up in her heart what the angels had said to her ! Still more impossible his sanity being doubted by his mother and brethren !

This ascription of insanity to Jesus is found in the earliest Gospel, i.e., Mark. Seated in a house at Capernaum, a crowd

being assembled, a message is conveyed to him: 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.' This incident is related in each Gospel: Mark 3^{31, 32}, Matt. 12^{46, 47}, Luke 8^{19, 20}.

Why did they seek him? Matthew and Luke give no reason, but Mark does. In Mark 3²¹ we are told that 'they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.'

Now, on the assumption of the truthfulness of the Virgin Birth, it is impossible to believe that any word uttered by that child of supernatural origin, or any deed, however mighty, done by him, could have astonished his mother. And so it must have appeared to the compilers of the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. Utterly incongruous such an attitude of his mother in Gospels containing the Birth stories!

When, therefore, we search in Matthew and Luke for the explanation of the cause of his being sought by his mother and brethren, we search in vain! Mark's statement that 'they went out to lay hold

on him : for they said, He is beside himself,' is not, in those Gospels, to be found.

We are now free to devote ourselves to a critical examination of the first chapters of Matthew and Luke. Even a casual reader must notice that the two accounts vary very much. These things only are common to them, namely, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus are mentioned ; Jesus is called the Messiah ; the date of birth is placed in Herod's reign ; the birth takes place at Bethlehem. Hereupon two different structures are raised. In Matthew, Joseph's home is Bethlehem ; in Luke, it is Nazareth. In Matthew, the angel announces the birth *to Joseph* ; in Luke, *to Mary* ; in Matthew the divinity of Jesus is attested by a star in the east ; in Luke, by the words spoken to the shepherds ; in Matthew, the adoration comes from the Magi, in Luke from the shepherds.

As to the date of the birth, Matthew places it some years earlier than Herod's death year, i.e., 4 B.C. But Luke connects the birth with the census taken by the order of Augustus under Quirinius, gover-

nor of Syria, and this, despite Prof. W. M. Ramsay's arguments in 'Was Christ born at Bethlehem?' we believe cannot have been before A.D. 6. So between them there is a discrepancy of some ten years. Moreover, Luke contradicts himself. At the beginning he places the event in the days of Herod; in the next chapter we read, 'Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree.' The child was not then born. And so the two dates in Luke are separated by an interval of ten years.

Concerning these and other divergences which we postpone for the present, the argument is sometimes used that criticism does not destroy the historical value of these narratives, inasmuch as they agree in saying that Christ was born of a virgin, at Bethlehem, and in the days of Herod. Examine this argument. There are two traditions differing from each other; though they differ, the historical character and value of neither is lessened. On the contrary, they confirm each other. So the argument runs. Consider! If the

Virgin Birth actually took place, we are dealing with the most important event in the history of the world. Yet the record of it is confined to a small fragment of four chapters of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Outside those chapters there is no mention of it; on the contrary, we find historical statements made, and theological ideas propounded, opposed to it. And in the four chapters themselves the accounts are riddled with inconsistencies!

Assume a case. Ten men have to give evidence as to an incident that happened, say, only ten years ago. Taken individually, the evidence of each man is far from trustworthy. Does the fact that the whole ten agree in a few main points establish the trustworthiness of each?

That is the position in connexion with these two accounts. Destroy either, the other is provocative of doubt. A resurrection of the other leaves the doubts untouched. But when we examine the two accounts more closely, we observe something very singular, namely that

each account contains two separate and conflicting traditions. Our witnesses not only *contradict each other*, but *they contradict themselves*.

In each Gospel we get a genealogy. The genealogies conflict with each other. In each Gospel we get a story of a Virgin Birth; the stories not only do not agree with each other, but they are absolutely irreconcilable with the genealogies. The genealogies trace Jesus' descent through Joseph; whereas *the very essence of the story of the Virgin Birth is that he had no earthly father*.

Let us take the genealogies first.

Drawing up genealogies was no uncommon thing at that time, but it was very unscientific.

Why were these genealogies wanted? Israel had a certain religious tradition. It was, that a Messiah was to come, and that that Messiah would be a descendant of David. Jesus elected to allow his disciples to believe he was the Messiah. Hence his being called Son of God, one of the titles of the Messiah. As soon as the

first Christians hailed Jesus as the elect of God they were bound to believe he was the Messiah. At the death of Jesus, to win the Jews, the disciples entered into an argument, based on Old Testament prophecies, to prove Jesus' Messiahship; and these genealogies are part of that argument. The kernel of the argument is: descent of Jesus from David *through his father Joseph*. If Joseph was not his father, the genealogies are waste paper. Had the early Christians possessed the slightest idea of a miraculous birth, they would have drawn up the genealogy of Mary—which doubtless would have been quite as easy and quite as indefinite.

Here, however, we have two independent attempts, each based on the notion that Joseph is the father of Jesus. Matthew's list runs down from Abraham to Joseph and Jesus, in three periods of fourteen generations each. Luke's list runs up from Jesus 'being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph' to Adam himself, 'the son of God.' These two genealogies are beyond the wit of man to reconcile.

But the ascription of kingly descent to Jesus introduces us to a subsidiary irreconcilability in the Gospels. We see in the Gospels two traditions as to the place of Jesus' birth. Outside of the first two chapters in Matthew and Luke, Nazareth is accepted as a fact. In Mark 6¹ we are told 'he went out from thence; and he cometh into his own country' (Nazareth). In John 7^{41, 42} we read, 'What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' The Pharisees, as we read, knew that the anointed of the Lord could only be a son of David; and from Micah 5^{1, 2} the inference was drawn, according to the method then in vogue, that the Messiah must come from the city of David. When Herod called the scribes to him, men learned in Hebrew literature, they had no doubt where to find this dangerous child. Hence upon a misinterpreted, violated prophecy, a prophecy dependent for its application upon the presupposition

that Jesus was the Messiah, descended through Joseph from David, arose the transference of the place of the birth of the Master from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

But, as we have seen, the genealogies and the Virgin Birth are irreconcilable theories as to the source of Jesus' being. And we, with our modern scientific method and ideas, are confused when we are told that the same Gospels which give us the genealogies, are just those which relate the conflicting story of the miraculous birth. But the first three Gospels are not theological treatises, though they have not escaped modifications in the interests of theological ideas. We are to remember that it never entered into the heads of the early Christians to form a 'Christian literature' until some time after Jesus' death. They lived in expectation of a speedy end of all things; and when the end did not come, and eye-witnesses were passing across the bar; when memory was beginning to grow dim, and hope needed the support of conviction (for that of acquaintances' foundation was

ceasing to be), collections were made of the Master's sayings, and speculations, and beliefs springing from faith, were committed to writing. There was no censor, no harmonizer, no standard whereby to test ; and one speculation, one explanation was just as good as another. And so the Gospels grew up, a collection of reminiscences first of all, as seen in Mark, and in Matthew and in Luke without the early chapters ; beginning with the baptism, which event as we see in the Acts was esteemed by the disciples as the beginning of the gospel. The difficulty would be to find records of the beloved one's life, and anything bearing thereon would be gladly welcomed. And so a mosaic, as it were, came into being ; a mosaic of his life ; and the latest bits added are the early chapters of Matthew and Luke.

But the time came when the inconsistencies were perceived ; and the words as was supposed ' were inserted by a harmonizer between ' being the son ' and ' of Joseph ' in Luke's genealogy, and the final sentence in the genealogy of Matthew

took the form, 'Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.' Such alterations, of course, destroy the argument of the genealogies and make them absurd, for if Joseph was not Jesus' father he was not descended from David, and the Messianic argument falls to the ground. Mary had no connexion with the house of David, for as we see in Luke 1⁵, ³⁶, she was a kinswoman of Elisabeth, and Elisabeth was a daughter of Aaron. It so happens that we can see the hand of the harmonizer at work, for in Luke 2³³ (A.V.) we read, 'And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things'; whereas, in obedience to an older reading, we find that passage rendered in the R.V. 'And his father and his mother were marvelling at the things.' The same thing happens in Luke 2⁴³, the A.V. reading, 'Joseph and his mother knew not of it,' whereas in the R.V. we read, 'And his parents knew it not.'

Some little time ago Mrs. Lewis discovered a Syriac MS. wherein the last

sentence of Matthew's genealogy reads, 'Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin, begat Jesus that is called the Messiah'; and in 1²⁵ it reads, 'And he took his wife and she bore him a son and he called his name Jesus'; although in 1¹⁸ it was already stated that 'Mary was found with child from the Holy Spirit.' Whatever doubts there may be as to the date of that MS., it appears to me that in those days of the love of the supernatural, the persistence of a natural explanation emphasizes its value rather than diminishes it.

This ascription of the Messiahship to Jesus, by virtue of his descent through Joseph from David, however satisfactory it might be to Jewish-Christians, who were steeped in Hebrew lore and full of Hebrew hopes, could be of little value to Gentile-Christians, to whom such things would appeal but little. Hence the origin, in all probability, of the second tradition: that of the Virgin Birth.

Coming to the New Testament with no knowledge of contemporary ideas and

thought, the very strangeness of a Virgin Birth seems to add to the weight of the narrative. We so often believe a thing because it is absurd : there is in us something which seems to demand a natural cause for everything ; and if something defies every experience of human nature, the impossibility of believing in a causeless thing, flings us upon the bosom of the supernatural for a cause.

But the essence of a Virgin Birth is the unsolved problem of genius, and the world everywhere, and at all times, has had its geniuses : men who have towered in sublime grandeur above their fellows, seeming to defy any explanation on natural grounds. And so in the far East and the far West, the hero who had proved a blessing to his people was deemed of divine origin. Sometimes father and mother are divine ; oftener only the father, the mother being human. In Roman history we read of Apollo being the father of Augustus and of Scipio Africanus ; and, in Greece, of Pythagoras ; whereas Alexander the Great is the son of Zeus, who

visited his mother Olympias in the form of a serpent. Other instances might be cited. In the Old Testament itself we read of the miraculous births of Isaac, and Samson, and Saul, and in the New Testament of that of John the Baptist. In I Sam. 2²¹ we read, 'The Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived.' Secondary causes were suppressed, and the appearance of liberator and prophet was hailed as a direct interposition on the part of Jehovah.

Though one would hesitate to ascribe a Pagan origin to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, it would be folly, bearing in mind the state of things in the first century A.D., to deny that the atmosphere was congenial to its rise and acceptance. It met a necessity of Gentile-Christianity; a necessity felt by some Christian who was well acquainted with Old Testament literature. He connected Hebrew prophecy with Gentile thought, introducing a Christian doctrine objectionable to neither. In Isaiah 7¹⁻¹⁶ we read that king Ahaz was threatened by the kings of Syria and

Israel. He was urged by the prophet to ask for a sign, by which he might see that Isaiah was not deceiving him when he told him that the issue of the war would be favourable. The sign was, 'The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel' (God with us). The Hebrew term, translated virgin, means a young woman; not necessarily Isaiah's wife, nor anyone in particular, but some woman then living. Conception implying a definite period before delivery, Ahaz was practically told that in less than a year such a change would have occurred in his fortune that a mother would in joy call her child 'God with us.' This prophecy has nothing to do with the ordinary Messianic idea, though Christian theology has so esteemed it; for as has been well put, 'What consolation would Ahaz have had, if the prophet had said to him, Do not fear these two kings; in 750 years the Messiah will be born.' A hope so long deferred, would indeed make sick the heart.

We are now able to take the two accounts

of the Virgin Birth in Matthew and Luke, to solve their inconsistencies, and to show that they spring from two totally different spheres of ideas. Luke's account is a Jewish-Christian one in perfect harmony with the Old Testament ideas of the origin of genius; Matthew's account is a Gentile-Christian one, satisfactory to Pagan ideas, and made possible by the use or, rather, misuse of an Old Testament prophecy, namely, Isaiah 7¹⁴. It will be remembered that a Greek version, known as the Septuagint, was made of the Old Testament. The Hebrew word, in Isaiah 7¹⁴, meaning a *young woman*, was translated, in that version, by a Greek word 'parthenos,' meaning a *virgin*. And it is this Septuagint translation that the account in Matthew 1²³ follows: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child.' If we desire to be true to what Isaiah actually said, we must read, 'Behold, a young woman shall be with child.' In other words, as Lobstein points out, the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 7¹⁴ does not belong to the original Hebrew but to the Greek (Septuagint) version of it. If

Isaiah had meant 'virgin,' there was at his hands a word, different from the one he used, meaning virgin, and used in the Old Testament more than fifty times.

Let us first look at Luke's Gospel. It will be remembered that it tells us that Zacharias had a wife of the daughters of Aaron. Her name was Elisabeth. She was barren. An angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias and told him that his wife should bear a son who should make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him. This child is John, Jesus' forerunner. About this birth there is nothing more supernatural than we saw in Hannah's case. It was the direct interposition of God setting in action normal functions, to the end that a genius should be born. Six months later the same angel appeared in Nazareth unto Mary betrothed to Joseph of the house of David—an intimation of the Messiah's Davidic descent. He tells her that she should conceive and bear Jesus, and that the good God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. It has already been seen that Mary was not

of the house of David. Then follows a conversation. Mary asks how shall this be ? (verse 34). *Remove verses 34 and 35 and every notion of a virgin birth passes away.* The verses are 'And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man ? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee : wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God.'

Note carefully, verse 34 is a question by Mary. Verse 35 is the angel's answer. What is this answer ? It is a *second* promise of the birth of the Son of God ; a mere repetition of the promise contained in 1st, 32 : 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High.'

Now let us read on, leaving out verses 34 and 35, 'And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : and he shall reign over the house of Jacob

for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For no word from God shall be void of power. And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.' We have read the account without the two verses. We are unconscious of any elimination having been made. And yet these two verses are the *only verses* in Luke that can be adduced in support of the Virgin Birth! When they are cut out all that is left is an account of the ordinary birth of a genius—genius being due to divine interposition—similar to Elisabeth's, and in perfect harmony with the genealogy in Luke, if we strike out the words interpolated 'as was supposed' between the words 'being the son' and 'of Joseph' in the genealogy. The genealogy is restored to sense and the whole account in Luke, though smacking of the miraculous, and full of poetry, becomes

harmonious. It is one consistent whole emphasizing the descent, through Joseph, of Jesus from David. In other words, an affirmation of his Messiahship. If we can restore to common sense accounts so inconsistent, who shall deny the validity of the process? A further point before we leave this Gospel. This account tells us that Joseph went to Bethlehem with Mary, who was betrothed to him, she being great with child. But it says nothing about Joseph being moved to put her away privily. There is no reason, for it recognizes from first to last, with the slight emendation, the natural descent of Jesus from Joseph. Hence the revelation was made to Mary, and not to Joseph, as in Matthew.

When we turn to Matthew's account, we are in a different mental atmosphere. It is dominated by the idea that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of Mary. When Joseph marries her he finds her with child. He is naturally vexed, and is moved to put her away. And so the revelation *is made to him to reconcile*

him. Mary has been ignorant all along.

This is entirely in accordance with the philosophic allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament of the period, which was part of an effort to universalize Christianity and so to make it something more than a Jewish sect. Philonian tradition says the same about every child of promise. Zipporah we read is found by Moses pregnant but of no mortal ; Tamar is pregnant through divine seed ; Samuel is born of a human mother who became pregnant after receiving divine seed.

We are here in the region not of history, but of philosophy based upon a Greek conception of the universe.

We have arrived then at the conclusion that in only eight verses of the New Testament (Matt. 1¹⁸⁻²⁵) do we find the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. Everywhere else it is either ignored, or inferentially denied, or theologically impossible. These eight verses follow on after a genealogy which means nothing unless it means that Jesus is Joseph's son. Upon such evidence I decline to accept a belief which, however

supported by evidence, violates every experience and is repudiated by common sense.

It is a relief to faith, and an incentive to thought, to remember that theories concerning Jesus are after all due to the refusal of the human heart to accept a silent, far-away God ; the demand of the human mind that the chasm shall be bridged between the Infinite and the finite.

How does God reveal himself ? In these days it is impossible to accept the answer that satisfied the men of centuries ago. We span that chasm differently to-day. God is transcendent yet immanent. In poet and singer, prophet and reformer, inventor and artist, saint and hero, saviour and spiritual giant, we see revelations of some fragment of that great Eternal wherein their distinguishing characteristics are blended into one.

Jesus is a revelation of God ; in him God did dwell ; but, a spiritual giant, over all he soars. To him we go for that submission to God's will which made God's will his. He is a revelation of love

which is divine and can be human ; his life tells us that holiness, union with truth and justice, love that strips off all self-desire, obedience to the highest will, are natural to, and possible for, man. What he was, we are to be.

He is, in short, a *real* man. Not a *mere* man. The ideal man is seen in him ; and as we walk through our streets and see the perversions of humanity ; the unfulfilled promises and undeveloped possibilities, we yearn for a living, concrete presentation of the man Jesus, that the grandeur and sublimity, which God has ordained, shall be ours ; that compassion and tenderness, pure unselfishness and love, might warm our cold hearts and purge us of meanness and self-seeking.

A 'mere' man ? Aye ! there lies the whole world of difference between Christ and Christians ! In his eyes there were no 'mere' men. He saw in men Sons of God ; beings, the objects of Infinite love and care. He knew what manhood really meant. He knew it was divine. He is evidence of what manhood means.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

THE time-honoured prejudice against carrying coals to Newcastle would hardly hold as against one who should come bringing samples dug from his mines across the sea, in the hope that a microscopic scrutiny by his fellow-miners of England might result in the discovery of some new type of structure or some new fossil form that would add to their knowledge or his own. I undertake to bring you no novel subject here to-day, nor even, perhaps, a novel point of view ; and your interest in what I shall say may be confined to your wonder that I should have come so far to say it. The samples from my American mine will very likely prove commonplace, if not inferior to your own. But even then, good may be done. For you will have seen with what homely

materials men are building their fires and turning the wheels of their machinery on remote prairies, away from the centres of European and even of American illumination. And it may also illustrate afresh the unity of our world, if it shall prove that men, at least those of a common speech, are thinking in the most distant places thoughts akin to your own.

But when I mention the community of speech, which draws my land to yours by such manifold bonds of sympathy, I in effect admit that the mines in which I have delved belong alike to us all. Let me, then, express at the outset—what I should be ashamed to have come out furtively in my later dependence on their thought—my deep personal indebtedness from my student years, to your English Unitarian leaders. Of these, will you let me name Martineau as easily first; and after him Armstrong, Carpenter, Drummond, Herford, Upton, and Wicksteed, as those who have influenced me most. Nor would I neglect to speak the name of the *Hibbert Journal*, whose quarterly

visits during the past five years have made the wide spaces between one far western study and your London and Oxford seem as nothing to the invisible messengers of thought and spirit. However few traces of it all you may be able to discern in what follows, the enlargement that has come to me during the dozen years of my ministry from contact with the writings of English Unitarian and other Liberal thinkers seems to me to be very great. I should be happy if the utterance of these few personal words by way of introduction could at all serve to suggest to you an indebtedness that I feel is really beyond expression.

In stating my subject to be 'The knowledge of God,' I may have seemed to commit myself to the discussion of an abstract question in theology, of almost purely theoretical interest. But it must be clear that all vital theory both has its roots and bears its fruits in the concrete world of practical action. So I choose to approach my subject rather from the point of view of our evolution as a religious

movement, and to bring out certain wide-reaching implications of our position to-day of which few among us, as it seems to me, have become fully aware. I can indicate the trend which my thought is to take by choosing a figure from the great river that flows past the city where I live. It is the Mississippi, whose mighty flood waters the central plain of the United States, as it gathers tributaries from the far mountain-heights to east and west, and merges them in one deep, strong, silent current, that sweeps on past broad farm-lands and forests and swamps to pour itself, like the child of the sea that it is, into the southern gulf. Every drop of the water that forms the mighty river, whether its origin be some limpid lake in the northern woods or the muddy wash of some city gutter, is borne on by that resistless flow to make its special contribution to the whole. But here and there, as in every brook or river, there are eddies, where refuse and sticks collect, and where the water is slowly swirled round and round out of reach of the onward-rushing

current ; and quiet pools, behind some barrier of sand, where the water is still, and never knows the force and fulness of the central stream. Now I fancy myself not alone in wondering whether this comparatively minor movement that here we represent has in its heart merely the longing for some secluded eddy near the shore of our ongoing modern stream of thought and life, or whether it is preparing to take the risks and feel the exultations of the main current. Are we satisfied, that is, to stand only and always for 'the dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the protestant religion,' as Matthew Arnold loves to call it, and so stagnate and eventually perish as a little sect ; or are we anxious to realize, on however small a scale at first numerically, the true moral and spiritual catholicity of humanity, and so find ourselves shaken by the pulses and stirred by the aspirations of a broad world-movement, making ultimately toward a Universal Church ? Formally, I may say that what I wish to determine here is the true source, or

sources, and the legitimate trend of our Unitarian theology, or knowledge of God—that is the more theoretical phase of the question—and then, with what forces or tendencies in the existing religious situation our answer to this theoretical inquiry seems naturally to ally us—that is the more practical phase of the question.

I

The Unitarian movement, at least in America, began without any doubt in what it is now the fashion to call a new anthropology—a new doctrine of man. Channing's powerful revolt from the faith of his fathers, of which the central witness is his 'Moral Argument against Calvinism,' was due to the conviction which very early thrilled his being, that the older system, as he had heard it preached as a boy, was dishonouring alike to human nature and to that divine nature of which the human is the clearest reflection that we have. The gist of his message might be stated in a word as an insistence on

the humanity of God as revealed in the divinity of man.

Among recent orthodox writers, the one who gives Unitarianism the fullest credit for this notable departure is Dr. George A. Gordon, of the Old South Church, Boston, one of the leaders of the liberal wing of the Trinitarian Congregational Churches in America. He tells us, in his eloquent book, 'The New Epoch for Faith,' that 'the strength of the Unitarian tradition has been its assertion of the divine worth of human nature. . . . In its conception of man as naturally in league with God, and the organ of God because he is the son of God, New England Unitarianism has recovered one of the great traditions of the Christian faith.' This is generous recognition; yet almost in the same breath Dr. Gordon proceeds to charge Unitarianism with being 'meagre in its conception of God,' and to allude pointedly to 'the larger and deeper theology in which it would seem to be the destiny of Unitarianism to be absorbed.'¹

¹ Gordon : 'The New Epoch for Faith,' p. 286.

This last statement only echoes what had been more fully developed in his earlier book, 'The Christ of To-day,' where, speaking of the leaders of the first generation of Unitarians in New England, the author says, 'If that movement, which stands associated with so much that is great in our history, and whose roll-call includes so large a company of men distinguished alike for intellectual power and high character, should spend its force and run out, it will be owing to this one thing, more than to all others, that its leaders to-day have given up the meditation of a deeper return to the past. The eternal gospel lies there; it looks out through all the symbols of Christian history; it has meanings in it which the old names cover but do not exhaust, and which our modern thinkers do not begin to fathom; it has room in it for the great Unitarian contribution, and for every other vital conception that the struggles of noble men have forced afresh upon the attention of the world. The Unitarian movement has its opportunity here; it

must contemplate some kind of a return—a return consistent with its magnificent protest and achievement—or it must engage in a serious meditation with death.’¹

It would require but a slight change in the incidence of this language—an application to it, for example, of the figure of the river current and the eddies that I have used—to show that what Dr. Gordon has in mind for Unitarianism is not in fact, as he vaguely puts it, a return to the past, but rather an advance into the main stream of human progress, which ever bears within it the spiritual riches of that past, while slowly letting the sediment of its error and ignorance and bigotry sink to the ooze below. Now what I have it in mind to urge is whether this kind of language—and more like it could be quoted, if necessary, from other and widely divergent sources—is that rarest and least acceptable of all gifts, the advice of a candid friend, or whether it is the mere mouthing of theological prejudice, which we can safely decline to notice.

¹ Gordon : ‘The Christ of To-day,’ pp. 144f.

You will perhaps allow me to fortify my case by a quotation looking in the same direction from Dr. Martineau—surely both candid and a friend—a passage which the *Outlook*, the leading journal of liberal Congregationalism in the United States, likes to bring up now and again as descriptive of our deplorable plight. It is found in a letter, written near the end of the author's life to the Rev. Priestley Prime, and given by Dr. Drummond in the second volume of his Memoir. 'Your experience,' writes Martineau, 'confirms my growing surmise, that the mission which had been consigned to us by our history is likely to pass to the Congregationalists in England and the Presbyterians in Scotland. Their escape from the old orthodox scheme is by a better path than ours. With us, insistence upon the simple Humanity of Christ has come to mean the *limitation of all divineness* to the Father, leaving man a mere item of creaturely existence under laws of Natural Necessity. With them, the transfer of emphasis from the Atonement to the Incarnation means

the retention of a Divine essence in Christ, as the head and type of humanity in its realized Idea ; so that Man and Life are lifted into kinship with God, instead of *what had been* God being reduced to the scale of mere Nature. The union of the two natures in Christ resolves itself into their union in man, and links heaven and earth in relations of a common spirituality. It is easy to see how the Divineness of existence, instead of being driven off into the heights beyond life, is thus brought down into the depths within it, and diffuses there a multitude of sanctities that would else have been secularized. Hence, the feeling of reverence, the habits of piety, the aspirations of faith, the hopes of immortality, the devoutness of duty, which have so much lost their hold on our people, remain *real powers* among the liberalized orthodox, and enable them to carry their appeal home to the hearts of men in a way the secret of which has escaped from us. I hardly think,' he adds, with a touch of the despondency natural to one whose sun was already

tipping the horizon—'I hardly think we shall recover it now.'¹

One is compelled by his respect for the writer's surpassing ability, and for the great experience from which he wrote, to assume that there must be in this remarkable statement some considerable measure of objective truth, even though one may not be able to accept it as a completely accurate account of current tendencies. For speaking, as I undertake to do, only for American Unitarianism, I have to say that it would regard itself as as much underrated in this judgment of Martineau's as it would think that Liberal Orthodoxy was overpraised. But at least the passage puts the question as to our future fairly before us. Has our work been only that of pioneers—negative, destructive, essentially protesting and not creative—and should we now retire before the advance of a mighty host of nominally orthodox men and churches announcing with their own peculiar enthusiasm and

¹ Drummond: 'Life and Letters of James Martineau,' Vol. II, p. 231.

stamping with their own particular type of spirituality the things that have long dwelt familiarly in our souls and sounded from our lips? Such a conclusion from our past seems to me essentially unthinkable. One can part company with a leader like Martineau only with a heavy sense of responsibility and a full reverence for the weight of his natural authority. Yet for one, while I join with a great lifting of heart in his endeavour to expand the name of Christian to the widest inclusiveness and the highest significance, I cannot share in his other characteristic attitude of deliberately shrinking the meaning of the Unitarian name and cause into the smallest possible compass, making it describe a single obsolescent doctrine of God instead of what it really is—a great charter of the soul in its infinite quest for truth and righteousness and love. In the keeping of historical continuity, names do matter, after all. And to give to our own particular name a connotation smaller than the spirit in which we hold and honour it appears to me utterly to

misread the purport of our unfolding history, and to imperil our future by gratuitously turning over to others work that legitimately may belong, though not to the exclusion of any who can do it with us, to ourselves.

Europeans are said not to be able to adjust themselves easily to the excessive and senseless optimism, as it sometimes seems to them, of dwellers in the United States. But Americans, and western Americans above all others, are not able to approach any subject in the mood of 'we, being about to die, salute you.' Whatever may be the truth here in England, our movement over there appears to me to be conscious of immense inherent vitality and reserve strength. We feel that by every right of service and of prophecy a large share in the religious future of the world belongs to us. Yet it is not to be denied that we often find ourselves chafing, as perhaps do you, under limitations to action and particularly to sympathy which are in large part self-imposed. We continue, in our realized

achievement, to talk and act like a sect. Our life, much of it, swirls leisurely round and round, carefully cherishing so much of sacred debris as has floated in to us from the wider stream of the centuries. And sometimes we look to critical observers like a still pool, untouched by the urgent life that hurries past, and only concerned lest our mystic serenity and our inner peace be not rudely entered upon and violated by influences foreign to our taste and tradition. The figure, like all rhetorical devices, overstates, while yet it forcibly suggests, the truth. I beg you to content yourselves with receiving the suggestion, and not to quibble even with your own minds over the exaggeration, if such there be. Of the main point to be considered, I am sure. Who, then, or what, shall deliver us from the impoverishment of a false and unnatural isolation? How shall we learn to forget ourselves as a sect, at least enough to become a church of the living God, while yet we remain true to the little stream from the high hills of faith, fed by the

pure spring of many an honoured and consecrated life, which lies behind—a precious heritage from the past ? Is there anything that could engage our thoughts more worthily than the solution, in theory and in action, of this problem ?

II

I can best come at the solution that I desire to offer by dwelling for a little space upon the ruling conception of the body of churches nearest to our own in historical affiliation and present outlook, the churches of that liberalized Orthodoxy to which Dr. Gordon invites our return, and which Dr. Martineau looked out upon as divinely chosen to fulfil our mission. The leading conception of this movement is clearly what it calls 'the consciousness of Christ.' There is little need of either amplifying that simple statement, or adducing texts from the various writers to support it. Christ, says Dr. Gordon, with much impressiveness of emphasis, is 'the supreme person in time,' and as such must stand to us as the mediator

of God, who is 'the supreme Person beyond time.' God in Christ—that is the watch-word of this whole trend of thought. It is about all that gives to it any title to orthodoxy. For Orthodoxy, to-day, seems to consist in little more than in holding that for our theology, or our knowledge of God, we must go back to 'the mind of Christ,' as its great original and source. Without this consciousness of Christ, so it is endlessly reiterated, we could never have come to the knowledge or the love of God, the Father. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself—and so the familiar phraseology streams on without end. But what does it all mean? Is it the human and limited and presumably fallible Jesus, as we have record of him in the fragments of his life and teaching that have come down to us in the Gospels, who is to serve as this supreme and all-embracing and conclusive organ of our knowledge of God?

The movement called 'Liberal Orthodoxy' has now entered upon a further and highly significant phase of develop-

ment in the so-called 'New Theology,' most prominently associated for the moment with the name of the minister of the City Temple, London. In his recent volume, which may fairly be taken as the manifesto of this movement, Mr. Campbell attempts to answer the query just raised by stating a distinction whose obvious collapse while in the very process of his skilful manipulation shows beyond a question whither the movement of which he is a leader is logically and practically tending. It is the distinction, as he phrases it, between Jesus, the divine man, and the eternal Christ or incarnate Son of God. In line with the older orthodoxy, the attempt is first made to save in some fashion the uniqueness of Jesus as a revelation to us of God. Thus the author says in one place, 'It is no use trying to place Jesus in a row with other religious masters. He is first and the rest nowhere ; we have no category for him.'¹ And again, 'If all the theologians and materialists put together were to set to work to-morrow

¹ Campbell : 'The New Theology,' p. 70.

to try to show that Jesus was just like other people, they would not succeed, for the civilized world has already made up its mind on that point, and by a right instinct recognizes Jesus as the unique standard of human excellence.'¹ How purely the writer begs the question of Jesus' uniqueness and the conclusion of the civilized world respecting him in this language, we may judge from other statements woven into the same facile pages. As to the category in which Jesus is to be placed, we read further that 'Strictly speaking, the human and divine are two categories which shade into and imply each other ; humanity is divinity viewed from below, divinity is humanity viewed from above.'² Or again, ' We have to get rid of the dualism which will insist on putting humanity and Deity into two separate categories.'³ But the conclusive passage, in which the case for orthodoxy as implying any sort of limited or unique incarnation of God in Christ is utterly

¹ 'The New Theology,' p. 74. ² *Ibid*, p. 74.

³ *Ibid*, p. 81.

abandoned, is the following :—‘ All human history represents the incarnation or manifesting of the eternal Son or Christ of God. The incarnation cannot be limited to one life only, however great that life may be. It is quite a false idea to think of Jesus and no one else as the Son of God incarnate. . . . If he came from the farther side of the gulf and we only from the hither · if we are humanity without divinity, and He divinity that has only assumed humanity—perfect fellowship between him and ourselves is impossible. But it is untrue to say that any such distinction exists. Let us go on thinking of Jesus as Christ, the very Christ of glory, but let us realize that that same Christ is seeking expression through every human soul. . . . We can rise toward Him by trusting, loving, and serving Him ; and by so doing we shall demonstrate that we too are Christ the eternal Son.’¹

This is Liberal Orthodoxy, thinking itself clear, to a conclusion of which its leaders appear as yet unconscious. But

¹ ‘ The New Theology,’ pp. 106f.

the process of thought is still going forward, though in the present volume it stands in a dangerously unstable equilibrium. The depth of Mr. Campbell's confusion over his humanly perfect Jesus and his eternal Christ seems to oppress even himself at times. Having said without qualification of Jesus that 'His consciousness was as purely human as our own,'¹ he later affirms, 'When I speak of the eternal Christ, I do not mean some one different from Jesus, though,' he inconsistently adds, 'I certainly do mean the basal principle of all human goodness.'² The ground of this divorce between a Christ who is a person and a Christ who is a spiritual principle is clearly the failure of the writer's inherited feeling to follow his reasoned thinking. He feels as if somehow Jesus must have been unique, yet he has begun to believe in the immanence of God as extending alike to all mankind. The ultimate issue of such reasoning is shown beyond any doubt in the illuminating question, which he

¹ 'The New Theology,' p. 79. ² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

throws out without fully perceiving its significance—'With what God have we to do except the God who is eternally man?'¹ So the Scripture text, if it is to keep pace with the rapid advance of this newest orthodoxy, will have to be amended to read, 'God was in *man*, reconciling the world unto himself'; and what is this but the essential message of Channing?

Still let us not leap too triumphantly to this conclusion. There are vital differences yet to be resolved between ourselves and even these foremost scouts of the older faith, led on by the minister of the City Temple. It is our duty as thinkers to resolve them. And first, What is the mystery by which, as we heard Martineau plaintively regretting, the liberalized orthodox are able 'to carry their appeal home to the hearts of men in a way the secret of which has escaped from us'? It seems to me perfectly plain. All the world loves a lover, and it loves a romancer next. Tell it a story that will give room

¹ 'The New Theology,' p. 89.

for the play of fancy and food for the imagination—more hungry in this sordid, monotonous modern age than almost ever before—and you will draw humanity to your feet. Now the New Theology is thus far simply the romantic spirit working on the shattered remnants of the old theology, under the controlling check of modern criticism and science.

It is not any more a question of repeating the ancient tale of heaven and hell, of election and predestination, and an everlasting damnation or bliss. Those iron counters of thought, minted with such tremendous pressure in the cold, clear intellect of Calvin, are no longer allowed to circulate, except in backward districts where the currents of present-day commerce cannot easily penetrate. There must be a new vision of the soul and its destiny here and hereafter ; and yet, from force of inherited feeling, the old cannot be left wholly out of the account. So a change is deliberately made from the forensic metaphor of the atonement—Christ offered up as a substitute for all

sinful men at the bar of infinite justice—to the materialistic metaphor of the incarnation—God entering into our flesh in Christ that we might partake of his spirit, through faith in the eternal Son.

But the presiding genius of the theology thus resulting is that imaginative sprite beloved of man—Romance. It is all a matter of interpretation. There is almost no dispute, none between theologians educated in modern critical and historical scholarship, as to the facts. The main facts, indeed, are almost distressingly prosaic and simple. A young Jew, some nineteen hundred years ago in Palestine, lived a noble and beautiful, though not necessarily a perfect, life, which ended in a great sacrifice ; and left behind him not only the memory of wonderful sayings, from which mankind might drink the deepest draughts of truth and inspiration, but also a devoted company of disciples who, prepared by inward experiences that they had while he was with them and by others that came after he was gone, eagerly transmitted his message to their country-

men. A new extension was given to the gospel, thus early preached with self-devotion and even martyrdom, when it slowly spread to the wider circle of Greek-speaking peoples in Asia Minor, and later over the whole Roman Empire. And in the end the civilized world, with many a return to the barbarism and ferocity of its ancient inner lust, made at least outward profession of the religion, now almost transformed by Greek philosophy and Roman organization, of the Prophet of Nazareth. This is the plain, unvarnished tale out of which it is proposed to fashion a theology of the incarnation of God in our flesh as Christ. Can anyone fail to see how completely our stolid, Occidental minds have been placed under the spell of Oriental fancy? The actual incarnation of God is in universal man. But that is too little dramatic and picturesque for a popular gospel. To see God in your casual neighbour requires a keenness of penetration, a generosity of sympathy, and a breadth of goodwill that are not to be looked for promiscuously in the great

congregation. So the whole is made into a drama, wherein the sinless and triumphant Christ becomes the protagonist of our burdened and sinful humanity. It is this predominantly emotional process that is the distinguishing mark of the New Theology. It springs from a pure romanticism, which mingles all the slowly accumulating spiritual treasures of the race in the capacious crucible of its dissolving fancy, and pours out the result as what it calls 'the Eternal Christ.'

Our ministers and churches, trained in habits of a stricter and more simple veracity, or let us say of a more sober scientific and historical realism, look on at this magic and its resulting fascination with amazement. Or, rather, we follow afar off with formulas that seem to us adequate and conclusive, and wonder that the world does not share our unfeigned delight in this work of our brains. The truth would seem to be that it does not do so partly because we too show but few signs as yet of apprehending the full sweep of our own principles. The New

Theology, with all its romanticism and vagueness, is nevertheless using the life and inspiration of Jesus in a large way, to light the whole course of the human pilgrimage, and to shine down, as Emerson said of the Christian Sabbath, 'alike into the closet of the philosopher, into the garret of toil, and into prison cells';¹ while our traditional habit is to use that life and inspiration in a small way, making it a thing, though beautiful and ideal, yet remote, abstract, and untouched either by the infinite pathos of the human or the infinite penetration of the divine nature. It remains to set before ourselves and before the world the deeper, controlling principles of the movement to which we belong, in order that, having first more fully realized itself, it may then go forth bearing its gifts out to a waiting humanity. This is what I shall attempt to set forth in the conclusion.

¹ Emerson's 'Works,' Centenary Edition, I, p. 150.

III

It is clearly one of the marks of moral greatness and spiritual promise in the New Theology that its vision seems steadily fixed on the world's crying need for help rather than on its own need for growth. Whether or not we find ourselves in complete accord with the foundation principles of Mr. Campbell's position, we can only wish that in this respect our spirit may be as his. A brilliant American writer has said that 'Fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim.'¹ From that kind of forgetfulness, which leads to the empty zeal of the narrowly sectarian mind, and the fatal waste of endeavours that stray wide of their mark, may we pray effectually to be delivered! And what, then, does our movement exist to do? Is it not to prepare for the advent of the perfect humanity, the coming of the kingdom of God on earth? How this may best be accomplished is for us the question of the hour. And I have no impulse to minimize

¹ Santayana : 'The Life of Reason,' I, p. 13.

any of the needful aids to our denominational development. But, surely, the organizing of churches, the educating of ministers, the planting of missions, the securing of buildings and endowments, and whatever else goes with a healthful growth of our body of free churches—all of these are only means to effectiveness and never the central aim itself. That aim, let us always remember, is the forming of men, for the reforming of the whole society in which we live.

We come, then, to the second point of difference that I wish to emphasize between our position and that of the group of popular social movements of which the New Theology is only the religious phase. I have hinted that we are naturally realists rather than romanticists; let me further suggest that we are by tradition and instinctive preference individualists rather than socialists. Thus in our theological thinking we do not use the powerful conception of modern orthodoxy, the 'consciousness of Christ,' because we clearly see that that so-called conscious-

ness is in reality an artificial compound, an historically unjustifiable composite of many men of many minds, with only slight attachment to Jesus himself. Pre-eminently it includes the epoch-making contributions of those who first interpreted Jesus to the world, above all Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel, and many another before and after. Such a merging of individual personalities under the dominance of a controlling principle is foreign to all our sympathies. Why not let each man stand for and by himself ?

Now the same thing readily repeats itself in turning to the allied province of social theory. We see at once why a theology that is able without self-reproach to sweep together the separate personalities of a multitude of dedicated spirits into its mystical 'mind of Christ'—why such a theology finds a congenial outlet in a gospel of social collectivism. It was not for nothing that Karl Marx was a disciple of Hegel ; and Mr. Campbell in admitting his dependence on Thomas Hill Green proclaims himself as standing in the same

line of discipleship. Here again, as in his attitude upon the nature of Christ, he falls far short of maintaining an unswerving consistency. If in one sentence we find him professing that the New Theology is only the religious interpretation of economic Socialism, in the next he is quite likely to be found pleading for the very different thing which has been our chief care, the creation of a higher individualism. Beyond the shadow of a doubt the world calls urgently for both external and internal transformation to make it in any degree resemble the kingdom of the Spirit for which we look. And practically Socialism soon enough sobers down to a programme of social reform that most of us can cheerfully join in trying to realize in action. Yet in its theory and in its impelling motive the collectivist gospel is the romance—to use that serviceable word once more—of economics. What chiefly distinguishes a romance from a sober historical narrative is that in the former you can fashion your characters as you like and make them do what you will,

while in the latter it is the character of the actors that alone determines the issue at every turn of the real drama and so shapes the whole. It is all very well for purposes of popular appeal to assume as proved that when all men have given to them a right education, plenty of congenial work, enough rest and pleasure and freedom from heavy anxiety, the world will then be the perfect place we seek to make it. But, while there is ample room and crying need for advance in these directions, it remains a profound truth that the personal will is still the real citadel to be attacked. That that will is not determined by circumstance but free ; that it may and often does grow selfish and callous and unsocial in the midst of material prosperity by rejecting the promptings of the spirit of love ; on the other hand that it is open to a higher appeal even under the inequalities and competitions of to-day, and can be persuaded to begin here and now the preparation of an ultimate human brotherhood—this is the range of facts to which we are to appeal, and shape upon them a

religious and social philosophy whose guiding principle will be no formless Absolute, but this concrete, living, unfathomed human Personality. Until we have expanded to the utmost that hidden life in every soul, we cannot look for the kingdom, which humanly speaking, is not to be realized in a material or spiritual Socialism, but in an ultimate society of perfected spirits. 'Unless the universe is organized in each one of us,' says Thomas Davidson, 'we cannot as individuals be universal, and therefore cannot be eternal.'¹ 'The kingdom of God is within you,' said Jesus, and he himself remains our best type of the developed individuality that can alone make the kingdom possible.

Whatever is to be said for the speculative truth of the doctrine of the immanence of God,

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the
soul and the clod,

the only divine immanence with which we have practically to do as social workers

¹ Davidson: 'The Philosophy of Goethe's "Faust,"' p. 157.

is the universal présence of God in humanity; and humanity is never an abstraction but always a collection of living, advancing human beings. The shaping of individual souls in the direction of their possible perfection is no petty task to be despised, or to consign those who engage in it to be ranked as inferior men. Socrates spends the greater part of his seventy years in drawing out of a group of Athenian youth some perception and definition of the ultimate beauty and the ultimate truth, and from the fountain of their casual talk springs the world's ethical and religious philosophy. Jesus gives his few brief months of ministry to impressing upon a small band of carefully chosen followers his secret of a more inward and spiritual approach to God and man, and from those searching communications by the wayside and the lake-shore and in the upper chamber, we have the Gospels and the Christian Church, and no man knows what store of yet unexhausted impulse toward the perfect life for mankind upon the earth.

Our inspiration for practical work is simply the presence of a still unformed humanity, made up of a multitude of unsatisfied souls, pressing so close about us. In their yearning to know, to feel, and to do the thing that is right, we have our boundless opportunity as preachers of a living word. And the source of our knowledge of God is also there—there, in these other souls and in our own. In human idealism, unquenched by failure and undimmed by postponement, we find our vision of the Highest. If we see him also in the star or the stone or the clod, it is because our sensitive mysticism has already been thrilled by a more intimate Presence in the breast. In the passion for brotherhood, slowly lifting and knitting the races together, rather than in the universal dance of electrons leading apparently nowhither, we gain our clearest insight into the divine Unity. *There* we feel is the gravitation of Love, of which the material gravitation of atom to atom and star to star is but an outward and mechanical image. The play of the In-

finite Power is most convincingly shown by that which in the spirit of man prepares for the revelation of the sons of God, advancing to meet their Father in his divine kingdom.

IV

It may be that I have latterly spoken too much in the language of figure and of suggestion. If so, my ending must be utterly plain. I have tried to say that, in my conception of our mission, the light of the glory of God which the romantic spirit of the New Theology still inclines it to throw largely, if no longer quite altogether, upon the face of Jesus Christ—conceived as an ideal above the human or at least the individual plane—that light it remains for us with our more realistic and individualistic prepossessions to diffuse over this whole long and wide company of the sons of men, with whom we find ourselves on pilgrimage. The new realism of the historical method has taken many a gleam of inspiration from Moses, and directed it upon the prophets and Ezra, and

from Jesus to attribute it to Paul or John. But however the emphasis changes, humanity is not thereby impoverished, but enriched. Humanity is itself the mighty flood of life that ever flows onward, bearing within it the spiritual wealth of the world. A new enthusiasm of humanity, felt for the whole, and most for the single units nearest to ourselves, is what can alone lift us out of our sectarian littleness into a catholic largeness that shall yet involve no surrender of principle. We do not have to wait for numbers, or for the permission of others, to begin to realize what Martineau calls 'a modest but sincere catholicity.'¹ If we will look earnestly for them, we can find in every community untrammelled moral and spiritual forces at work in the churches nearest of kin to our own, but more outside the churches, with which, if we have the needful humility and sympathy, we can be heartily joined. It may be a matter of indifference to us that we have to forfeit ecclesiastical approval and popular applause in our

¹ Martineau : 'Essays,' II; p. 399.

following of the right. Only let *us* never dare to take the exclusive tone ; for in so far as the human bond is broken, the seamless garment of the love of God on earth still remains rent. Only slowly can men be brought to pray together, without compromise and without concession. But the recognition of a common aim will as soon as anything bring about a common worship ; and this will not often be arrived at by discussion, but will always draw nearer through a common enthusiasm for ideal values.

To turn to Martineau once again, he tells us solemnly that ' If there is one persuasion that has sunk deeper than another into the heart of this age, it is that God and man find each other somewhere else than in theology, that the religion of opinion is superficial, and that to rise into unity of faith we must transcend and forget the life of the creeds.'¹ What can this mean that but God and man find each other where man and man have found each

¹ Carpenter : ' James Martineau : Theologian and Teacher,' p. 455.

other first—in the sympathy kindled by a common work? And perhaps I may complete the thought by adding some words by one of my Western American colleagues, in a private letter received just before my departure. ‘To me,’ the writer says, ‘there is no gospel that is not distinctly and deeply social in its nature. There is nothing we ministers can do that is so vitally religious as the rousing of a social conscience. And it has seemed to me,’ he adds, ‘that our Unitarian body is providentially small in order the better to undertake a genuine, searching, compelling social gospel. If it does not accept this logic of its own past and of its very position in the religious world, it does not deserve to live, and in my judgment it will not.’ To which my own heart could only answer with a fervent Amen!

And now, for a moment more, what of the fate of our little rill of faith and its Unitarian name? Well, I am not one of those who look to see that name dwindle before any other name whatsoever. It appears to me of deep significance that,

all the world over, progressive minds are advancing to positions that we had already worked out as our own, though in no exclusive sense. It is full of meaning that liberal men, of whatever church connexion, as soon as their liberalism has become bold enough to step over the barriers of Broad Church ambiguity and compromise, are hailed from every side as Unitarian. It is a new thing in the world for a movement to proceed out of the very soil of Christendom that can stretch one of its branches across the sea to India, and plant a self-sustaining root of itself in Japan, and yet with no sacrifice of conviction on the one or the other side. The name of Christian was first given as a reproach, until those who bore it made it a glory. So, if we are true, our name may become a glory—how great is not for us to tell. It carries no stain of persecution, of religious warfare, of fraternal bloodshed. It can no longer be tied down to connote only a hard and fast theory of the Godhead. Already it far transcends that meaning, and signifies Unity—the unity of law, the unity of

mankind, the unity of God as the fulness of all in all. It only waits for our little stream or eddy to feel the lifting of the great flood of human fellowship that is fast rising in the world, to be borne out into the central current and on to vaster issues than our eyes have yet beheld. Let us fare on, then, bravely, modestly, and humanely, and the far future may read in what we do a largeness of which we little dream. What alone can bring the miracle to pass will be a nobler vision and consecration in ourselves. It will be by our fruits that we are known ; not by our roots. In the midst of a still divided church and a still distracted humanity, though with more of the Spirit's light shining in the world than ever before, let us strive to be foremost among those who are sounding quietly and persistently the note of inclusiveness, of catholicity, and of unity. Our trust is to be in the strength of our principles, not of our numbers. We, above all men in the world, cannot afford to despise any, whoever may profess to despise us. The external catholicisms,

which consist in drawing great multitudes together in formal allegiance, while much of humanity is shut out, have long shown signs of decay. But the true inner catholicity, based upon sympathy and conviction derived from seeing the same divine realities from slightly differing viewpoints, that is in process of having in these days a wonderful new birth, whose maturing will be for the healing of the nations. As we have begun, so we must continue, the apostles of a universal spiritual principle. And at length—at length—shall there not be added unto us by the great Lord of the harvest the thirty and sixty and one hundred-fold of the promise? Let us only see to it that in the breadth of our sowing and in the greatness of our hope, we are not lacking!

Oct 7/08.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

It is not many years ago since a certain victory was won in the English Church over the doctrine of Eternal Punishment. It was plainly declared that to hope for universal redemption was not inconsistent with subscription to its formularies. I remember well with what joy this tiny boon was accepted by many of us. Since that time, and, indeed, before that time, the same revolt against the doctrine has been going on in a great number of the orthodox religious bodies; even among the Wesleyan Methodists—perhaps the most strong of all the Dissenting bodies in their assertion of this doctrine—a disturbance has arisen which has greatly afflicted the leaders of that body. In England, in Scotland, and even in the Church of Ireland, this subject has been so

prominently brought forward, that many ministers have ceased to preach directly upon the doctrine of eternal punishment. And now an ever-increasing number of the clergy, and a still greater number of the laity, have wholly and openly put out of their creed the abominable doctrine of everlasting punishment.

To this position men have come but slowly. To say that the doctrine ought to have been held abominable a century ago, would be absurd. The mass of men cannot be before their age, and the doctrine of eternal hell could not strike the religious men of the past as immoral. Neither their idea of God nor their idea of man fought against it. Men did not believe then in the universal brotherhood of man, and therefore could not believe in the universal Fatherhood of God. But the moment that in the political and social sphere of thought the idea of all mankind as one nation, of which all men were by right of their manhood citizens, and of all men as forming a universal brotherhood, took shape and ran like fire over the world,

kindling the commonest soul into passion—that moment the doctrine of universal redemption began to grow also in the minds of men. Religious men, arguing from what they felt as citizens, conceived a loftier notion of the duties of God's kingship. He owed it to himself, they felt, to redeem and ennoble and make perfect his subjects. And, arguing from what they felt as brothers one of another, they felt that in the realm of religion universal brotherhood could only be spiritually based on a doctrine of God's universal Fatherhood. If, then, God is the Father of all men, and men his children, is it not incredible that a Father can send to utter moral ruin and eternal pain the greater part of his children? If he does, he cannot be a Father; he has no sense of the duty of a Father, nor of the love of a Father. If eternal hell be true, we have no God at all, or none we choose to worship. And the declaration through Christ of Fatherhood is then the cynical mockery of a tyrant.

That kind of argument took root in

this country first through means of the poets, who feel more strongly than other men the duties and necessities of the heart. Then it stole into the mind of the laity, and lastly it reached the clergy, and it will not be long, though it lingers among the natural conservatives of the Church of Christ, before the old doctrine perish out of every pulpit in the land, and the test of orthodoxy be no longer, 'Do you believe in the devil?' but this, 'Do you believe in God the Father?'

The doctrine of eternal punishment ought to be denied, because of its evil fruits. A good tree does not bring forth corrupt fruit, and we owe to this doctrine all the slaughter and cruelty done by alternately triumphant sects in the name of God. It gave birth to the Inquisition; it drove the Jews to unutterable misery; it burnt thousands of innocent men and women for witchcraft; it tortured and rent the bodies and souls of men; it depopulated fertile lands; it ruined nations; it kept the world for centuries in darkness; held back civilization; and in all ages urged on the dogs of

cruelty and fanaticism to their accursed hunting.

So dreadful were its deeds, that a door of escape was provided from its full horror by the Church of the time. The doctrine of purgatory and of prayers for the dead was the reaction from its terrors, and it saved religion. Unrelieved of this merciful interposition, eternal punishment would have slain the world.

Those were its fruits in the past, and on this account we ought to deny its truth. But now we ought to fight against its lies day by day ; for we who do not believe it have no notion of the harm it is doing to those who do believe it. We are bound to contend against it if we have any desire that a nobler Christianity should prevail among men, for its teaching drives men into infidelity and atheism. The less educated classes, who yet feel strongly, and perhaps more strongly than the educated, the things of the conscience and the heart, say that it denies all their moral instincts. And so it does. It makes them look on God as an unreasoning

and capricious tyrant, and they turn from him with dread and hate. It makes them consider the story of redemption as either a weak effort on the part of an incapable God to save man, or a mockery by him of his creatures on the plea of a love which they see as derisive, and a justice which they think to be favouritism. And till we free the teaching of Christianity from this doctrine, religious teachers will still continue to give, as they do now, the greatest impulse to infidelity among the working classes—an impulse much greater than any given by all the materialism of philosophers or all the mouthing of iconoclasts. As to its influence on educated men, it is this : it throws an air of fiction over the whole of Christian teaching. These men cannot believe it if they believe in God. It represents, even apart from God, no idea at all to their minds. They know, being accustomed to reasoning, that the idea of everlasting punishment is inconceivable. But they are told that it is bound up with the whole of Christian doctrine ; that if they do not believe it,

they cannot believe the rest. They do not like to leave openly their Church or sect, and to profess themselves unbelievers ; they are thus driven to a mere conventional assent ; till, by degrees, Christianity (infected in their minds by this false doctrine) drops altogether out of their heart as a life-impelling power. They see what they believe to be a fiction walking about unchallenged and unreprieved among doctrines which, unaccompanied by this traitor, they could receive as honest and true, but which, bound up with it, they must reject. And, sooner or later, they do reject the whole. The one black sheep has infected all the flock, and all the flock are slain.

It has as evil a result in the case of those who teach it—and, indeed, in the case of those who are silent about it, but accept it—for it makes them unconsciously false. Of all who teach it, who believes it ? Only a few. The rest think they do, but do not. If they did, it would tell more vitally on their lives. A living faith in any truth influences the whole life,

changes character, modifies or rules all our dealings with men : and the belief in eternal goodness has that power. But the belief in eternal evil (for eternal punishment means eternal evil) has scarcely any power over the daily thoughts and acts of men. In more than half the acts and thoughts of those who say they hold it, it is implicitly denied ; more than half of those they meet are damned to eternal torture, to torture endlessly renewed with exquisite skill, so that when countless ages have rolled away, it cannot be said to have begun, and into every moment an eternity of pain is pent ; and believing this of half their friends and relatives and fellow-men, as they say, they can eat and drink peacefully, and beget children for whom that fate is reserved, and move without infinite horror among men. Nonsense ! they do not believe it at all. Do you mean to say there are a hundred persons in England who believe in eternal evil as they believe in eternal goodness ? It is not true what they confess with their lips, and they might as well know their own minds and

say at once, 'No; we do not believe it. It has no influence at all on our lives.' That is just what they do not do, and they reap their reward. They sow to lies, and they reap lying within. They think by asserting and asserting to convince themselves and the world of their faith. The world smiles behind its cloak, while these teachers spend half their time when they write, or talk, or preach, in diligently hiding away the fact that they do not believe what they say they do, till all their preaching becomes unreal.

They reap their reward, I say. It is a terrible business to have a falsehood domiciled with truth, and for its possessor, when he is only half convinced or not at all convinced of its truth, to take the greatest pains to dress it up like a truth. For the falsehood gets no good from the truths, but the truths all get maimed by the falsehood. They talk of the love of God, and his mercy, and his pity, and his justice, and his righteousness, and his Fatherhood, and the goodness of salvation. All the time they are talking, this hideous

companion in their own soul is laughing at all these things. Love of God—what of eternal torture? Righteousness of God—what of eternal evil? Good news, salvation—oh, have done with it all! And this, which goes on often in their own minds, goes on still more in the minds of those who listen, until the trail of a lie and its sickly odour defile their whole religious life. This evil belongs chiefly to the Protestant, and not to the Roman Catholic; the latter, at least, is better off. He has a chance, and more than a chance, of escaping this eternal doom.

That is one set of reasons why you should denounce the doctrine of eternal punishment. But those who most strongly assert this doctrine put forward an ethical objection to the opposite doctrine of universal redemption, which is at least worth considering. They say that the denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment produces the greatest of evils, because it destroys the doctrine of retribution, and weakens our fear of doing wrong, by taking away the punishment of wrong-

doing. This is the ethical objection, and it has its weight.

But, in answer, I say, first, what efficacy has fear in either bringing a man to God, or in deterring him from sin ? It is not the terror of Christ, but the love of Christ, which constraineth us to give up our guilt. The weapon of religious terror is always a devilish weapon, and it drives men to the devil. It confuses and renders idiotic a weak man. It hardens a strong one into fierce rebellion. It drives some to despair or recklessness of unclean living ; others, to scorn or hatred of God ; and the sacrifices it makes (unlike those made by a heart broken by love) are the sacrifices that the savage makes to his god, of whose character he is ignorant, or whom he fears because of ignorance.

As to its fruits, what are they worth ? The obedience wrung from a child by the uplifted lash, the reverence given through fear—would that please you, fathers and mothers ? What would you think it worth ? It is selfishness, not obedience. And do you think that God wishes that

selfish cry, or that he fancies it obedience ? If so, what sort of God is he ? Is a God obeyed only through fear worth obeying at all ? Is this religion, or superstition and idolatry ? No, we lose nothing in getting rid of the motive of fear as the motive of religion. But, in getting rid of that motive, and in denying the eternity of hell, do we in truth destroy the doctrine of retribution ? Not at all. We establish it, and are enabled to assert it on clear and reasonable grounds.

First, we can believe in it. The heart and the conscience alike refuse to believe in everlasting punishment. The imagination cannot conceive it. The reason denies its justice ; but the retribution taught by the opposite doctrine, that God's punishment is remedial, not final—that it is exacted, but that it ends when it has done its work—is conceivable, is allowed by the heart, for its root is love ; is agreed to by the conscience, for it is felt to be just ; is accepted of the reason, for it is based on law.

It is only when we deny eternal punish-

ment that we can assert in a believable manner the doctrine of retribution.

And, in our belief, the ground of retribution is this : that God cannot rest till he has wrought evil out of all spirits, and that this work of his is chiefly done by causing us to suffer the natural consequence of sin. That is, the very root of our belief in the non-eternity of punishment involves an awful idea of punishment. For on this ground God will not cease to be a consuming fire to a man till he has destroyed all his evil. Nor can he cease. The imperative in his nature binds him to root out evil, and God, does his duty by us. Is that to destroy and not rather to assert retribution ?

We can all understand that. Introduce evil into your life, 'you are introducing punishment. God will not rest till he has removed it. Sow to the flesh, and you will of the flesh reap corruption ; you shall reap the fruits of your own devices, and find in them your hell. And God will take care that you do. For his love knows well that only by knowing the

bitterness and death of sin and hell, you can be brought to hate it, repent of it, and cry, 'I will arise and go to my father.' Nor will God spare a single pang, if only he can bring us to his arms at last. Punishment in the world to come is no dream, but a dread reality. But it is strictly and justly given, and naturally it comes to an end. One cry of longing repentance ends it, one bitter sorrow for wrong, one quick conviction that God is love and wishes our perfection. But to produce that repentance, and till it is produced, God's painful work on our evil is done and will be done.

That is not the work of a tyrant, but the work of love. It is no weak love, as we are accused of preaching. It is the mighty all-knowing love which looks to the end, and in merciless mercy uses the means. It is love according to law ; the kind of love of which, when it has wrought its saving work, we acknowledge the justice. It is love which, though it causes suffering, does not injure the heart, for the root of it is not desire to make us suffer, but desire to make us all pure, and noble, and true,

and like the eternal love which must be true to right or cease to be love. When we have faith in that strong tenderness at the heart of punishment, when we know that every suffering God inflicts on men is born of his passion for their perfection, of his longing to make us all his own, his pure and perfect children, the heart rebels no more against punishment, nor does the conscience. The purified conscience claims retribution, will not be content to be let off from punishment, because were that possible, the sanctity of perfect law would suffer, and injury done to it would injure the whole world. The more ennobled the moral sense of man, the more does he insist, even to his own pain, on retribution. That which I have sowed, he says, I must reap.

Then you may say, 'What chance has a man of escaping in the end, if he is bound in this way under law?' No chance at all. Things in God's world are not chance. No chance, but certainty of escape, *according to law*. When he ceases to sow weeds, he ceases to reap weeds; when he

roots up the useless, poisonous plants in his soul and burns them, God helping him, then the soul receives the good seed, nourishes it, and he brings forth good fruit. Then he is no longer in punishment, retribution has become reward ; but both are terms for the one thing, the one law, that what we sow we reap. By the same law, we are in pain and in pleasure according as we use the law, in hell or in heaven. Surely that is plain enough, sensible enough—the answer of the conscience to it is unhesitating in approval ; the answer of the scientific reason is as clear in its approval.

But, some say, this change is not possible hereafter—man's character is fixed at death—as the tree falls, so it lies—they that are filthy are filthy still. The results of a long life of sin can never be destroyed or altered. Habits once rooted have a tendency to continue ; and when the change of death comes, we enter into a state in which these evil habits have unrestricted room to develop themselves, and do so.

First, that is nonsense. The analogy of

nature is against it. A tract of the earth may have got into a habit of earthquakes, but the upheaving force exhausts itself, and then nature repairs her wrongs, and the desert of lava becomes a fruitful field. An evil climate has slowly degraded a species. Let the climate change, and the animals gain new powers, seizing and appropriating what is useful for their development. But these are only analogies. The facts are against this brutal theory. I have known men who have been idle for years become hard workers under a new impulse, and those who have been under the power of habits of evil, such as seize on body, and soul, and spirit, overcome those habits and become new men; and if that happens even once, the single example refutes the theory, *if* we assume a God of love who is working with incessant impulses upon human souls. 'But he does not work so hereafter,' they say, 'in the world to come.' There is the real point, then, and what have we to say of it?

Why, it asserts either God's powerlessness to redeem the guilty, or his unwilling-

ness to do so, and the first assertion is treason to him, and the second blasphemy. If God cannot save, what becomes of his omnipotence ; if God will not save, what becomes of his love ; and if love be violated, what becomes of his justice ? In the acid of this theory God is utterly dissolved.

‘No,’ it is said, ‘sin is justly punished with eternal ruin,’ because, done against an infinite God, it is itself infinite, and, therefore, requires infinite punishment. That is a statement which catches the understanding in a trap, and persuades it that it is satisfied by a show of logic, by a clink of words ; and it has had in times past, and even now, a certain charm and attraction about it for many persons, such as a riddle has, or a trick of words which always seems on the point of being discovered, but never is discovered, because it cannot be discovered. And thousands have lived and died believing it. I do not blame them in the past. The idea of God was built upon the idea of a despotic king. But I do blame, and severely, those who believe it now, because

the higher light has come and they shut their eyes to it. No one now thinks that might makes right, and yet some men still continue to impute that wickedness to God. Moreover, what does the theory really assert? It asserts not only eternal punishment; it asserts eternal evil. It gives to evil the essential ground of the nature of the Deity, and makes two eternal powers in the universe, and these two for ever in opposition. It makes absolute goodness contentedly or uncontentedly permit absolute evil. It strips God of omnipotence, for it is wholly impossible to conceive—without destroying the very nature of absolute goodness—that it has the power to destroy evil and does not exercise it. God cannot allow eternal evil and continue God. And if he allows eternal punishment, he does allow eternal evil. It is a vile conception, and if it were true, we should be forced to pray to a cruel power for the only favour we could with all our hearts desire for the world and for ourselves, the favour of instant and complete annihilation.

But, lastly, it is said that if eternal punishment be not true, neither is eternal blessedness. They stand and fall together, and if we destroy the belief in everlasting punishment, we destroy the belief in everlasting happiness. That statement also sounds well. But what does it really mean? Translate it into clear words, and its falseness at once appears. Eternal punishment asserts eternal evil as eternal happiness asserts eternal goodness, and then the statement is actually this: If eternal evil be not true, neither is eternal goodness. And that is not only blasphemy, but folly. Goodness, if there is an everlasting God, is naturally eternal, self-existent, without beginning and without end. And the heart and reason of mankind accept that statement. It is on that ground of the natural and essential everlastingness of goodness, that we believe in the naturalness and necessity of everlasting happiness for those who are good.

On the other hand, everlasting misery is neither natural, necessary, nor possible, just because evil is not necessarily eternal.

That is not eternal which has an origin, and evil had a beginning. That is not eternal which is not self-existent and absolute, and evil is neither one nor the other, unless we say that evil is in God. The eternity of good does not involve the eternity of evil. On the contrary, it implicitly denies it. The argument is all the other way. If everlasting happiness be true, it means everlasting goodness, and if everlasting goodness be true, it means that evil cannot be everlasting; and if evil be not everlasting, punishment cannot be everlasting.

But, after all, what should we need of argument, if men would listen to the God within their own hearts. Appeal to those whose hearts are pure, who hate evil with the same passion with which they love God, whether they have ever conceived of the possibility of eternal sin, except in connexion with a shudder of disbelief in God, or at least have ever felt that the answer of their own heart—in moments when it was most consciously filled with God—to the question, Is evil eternal?

came as clearly as the answer to the question, Is good eternal ?

When we think of the eternity of sin, life is accursed, shrouded in unmixed and fatal doom. The world is hopeless, its vice and sorrow nailed to it for ever, and eternity, even if we are saved, stained and blackened with unfading horror ; and God himself, our king, an unrelenting tyrant who either cannot or will not conquer sin. We are told that God has conquered the evil of the lost, because he has bound them for ever and ever in hell. That is not conquest, but rather the notion which a savage chieftain has of conquest, which only subdues the outward powers, and yet leaves within the heart of millions, still burning unsubdued, the unconquerable will to do wrong, the ' study of revenge, immortal hate, and courage never to submit or yield ; and what is else not to be overcome.'

But when we think of the eternity of goodness and its conquest—and this we have now been driven to—the soul exults, even the blood stirs with joy ; all nature seems to sing along with us. Life puts on

its noble aspect. In our loneliness high thoughts and hopes are our companions ; among the crowd of men the light and life and joy of God move along with us. All work is dignified and great. Things seem worth the doing, thoughts worth thinking, endeavours worth perseverance, temptations worth resisting, trials worth the toil of conquering them, life, even the commonest, worth living nobly to the end. The curse of time departs. We can behold time devour youth and ' feed oblivion with decay of things,' and take into ' death's dateless night ' our early love and later friends, and overthrow the loveliness we craved for and we loved with ' wreckful siege of battering days,' and yet, beholding all this energy of decay, we can still rejoice, for we know that that Essence which made all things fair still lives and will live for ever, till it has made all these noble things around us fair and bright again, till the goodness of God is infinite in accomplishment of beauty.

And the wild sorrow of the world, tossing like a midnight sea its uplifted

waves to heaven in supplication, and our own sorrow, and the passions which rend and consume the heart, each an atom of dark water in that sea of sorrow, and the vice and crime and selfish greed which make of earth and of our own personal life so ghastly and so drear a thing, when our eyes pierce beneath the sugared crust on which we pace so merrily, as if there were no rottenness beneath—oh ! there is but one truth which can obliterate the horror of that vision, which can enable us to fight against wrong, and to conquer in the end, and give us power, faith, and hope in the face of this awful revelation ; it is the unconquerable goodness of God, the conviction, deep-rooted as the mountains, of his infinite love and justice, the knowledge that the world is redeemed, the victory over evil won, and that though the work is slow, not one soul shall be lost for ever.

IMMORTAL LIFE

It is the belief of mankind that we shall all live for ever. This is not a doctrine of Christianity alone. It belongs to the human race. You may find nations so rude that they live houseless, in caverns of the earth ; nations that have no letters, not knowing the use of bows and arrows, fire, or even clothes : but no nation without a belief in immortal life. The form of that belief is often grotesque and absurd ; the mode of proof ridiculous ; the expectations of what the future life is to be are often childish and silly. But, notwithstanding all that, the fact still remains—the belief that the soul of a man never dies.

How did mankind come by this opinion ? ‘ By a miraculous revelation,’ says one. But, according to the common theory of

miraculous revelations, the race could not have obtained it in this way, for according to that theory the heathen had no such revelations ; yet we find this doctrine the settled belief of the whole heathen world. The Greeks and Romans believed it long before Christ ; the Chaldees, with no pretence to miraculous inspiration, taught the idea of immortality ; while the Jews, spite of their alleged revelations, rested only in the dim sentiment thereof.

It was not arrived at by reasoning. It requires a good deal of hard thinking to reason out and prove this matter. Yet you find this belief among nations not capable as yet of that art of thinking, and to that degree—nations who never tried to prove it, and yet believe it as confidently as we. The human race did not sit down and think it out ; never waited till they could prove it by logic and metaphysics ; did not delay their belief till a miraculous revelation came to confirm it. It came to mankind by intuition ; by instinctive belief—the belief which comes unavoidably from the nature

of man. In this same way came the belief in God, the love of man, the sentiment of justice. Men could see, and knew they could see, before they proved it ; before they had theories of vision ; without waiting for a miraculous revelation to come and tell them they had eyes, and might see if they would look. Some faculties of the body act spontaneously at first ; so others of the spirit.

I think few of you came to your belief in everlasting life through reasoning. Your belief grew out of your general state of mind and heart. You could not help it. Perhaps few of you ever sat down and weighed the arguments for and against it, and so made up your mind. Perhaps those who have the firmest consciousness of the fact are least familiar with the arguments which confirm that consciousness. If a man disbelieves it, if he denies it, his opinion is not often to be changed immediately or directly by argument. His special conviction has grown out of his general state of mind and heart, and is only to be removed by a change in his whole

philosophy. I am not honouring men for their belief, nor blaming men who doubt or deny. I do not believe anyone ever willingly doubted this, ever purposely reasoned himself into the denial thereof. Men doubt because they cannot help it ; not because they will, but must.

There are a great many things true which no man as yet can prove true, some things so true that nothing can make them plainer or more plainly true. I think it is so with this doctrine, and therefore, for myself, ask no argument. With my views of man, of God, of the relation between the two, I want no proof, satisfied with my own consciousness of immortality. Yet there are arguments which are fair, logical, just, which satisfy the mind, and may, perhaps, help persuade some men who doubt, if such men there are amongst you. I think that immortality is a fact of consciousness, a fact given in the constitution of man, therefore a matter of sentiment. But it requires thought to pick it out from amongst the other facts of consciousness. Though at first merely a

feeling, a matter of sentiment, on examination it becomes an idea, a matter of thought. It will bear being looked at in the sharpest and driest light of logic. Truth never flinches before reason. It is so with our consciousness of God ; that is an ontological fact, a fact given in the nature of man. At first it is a feeling, a matter of sentiment. By thought we abstract this fact from other facts : we find an idea of God. That is a matter of philosophy, and the analysing mind legitimates the idea, and at length demonstrates the existence of God, which we first learned without analysis and by intuition. A great deal has been written to prove the existence of God, and that by the ablest men ; yet I cannot believe that anyone was ever reasoned directly into a belief in God by all those able men, nor directly out of it by all the sceptics and scoffers. Indirectly such works affect men, change their philosophy and modes of thought, and so help them to one or the other conclusion.

The idea of immortality, like the idea of God, in a certain sense is born in us,

and, fast as we come to consciousness of ourselves, we come to consciousness of God, and of ourselves as immortal. The higher we advance in wisdom, goodness, piety, the larger place do God and immortality hold in our experience and inward life. I think that is the regular and natural process of a man's development. Doubt of either seems to me an exception, an irregularity. Causes that remove the doubt must be general more than special.

Let me, however, mention some of the arguments for everlasting life.

The first is drawn from the general belief of mankind. The greatest philosophers and the most profound and persuasive religious teachers of the whole world have taught this. That is an important fact ; for these men represent the consciousness of mankind in the highest development it has yet reached, and in such points are the truest representatives of man. What is more, the human race believes it, not merely as a thing given by miraculous revelation, not as a matter proven by

science, not as a thing of tradition resting on some man's authority, but believes it instinctively, not knowing and not asking why or how, believes it as a fact of consciousness. Now, in a matter of this sort, the opinion of the human race is worth considering. I do not value very much the opinion of a priesthood in Rome or Judea or elsewhere, on this point or any other ; for they may have designs adverse to the truth. But the general sentiment of the human race in a matter like this is of the greatest importance. This general sentiment of mankind is a quite different thing from public opinion, which favours freedom in one country and slavery in another : this sentiment of mankind relates to what is a matter of feeling with most men. It is only a few thinkers that have made it a matter of thought. The opinion of mankind, so far as we know, has not changed on this point for four thousand years. Since the dawn of history, man's belief in immortality has continually been developing and getting deeper fixed.

The next argument is drawn from the nature of man. All men desire to be immortal. This desire is instinctive, natural, universal. In God's world such a desire implies the satisfaction thereof, equally natural and universal. It cannot be that God has given man this universal desire of immortality, this belief in it, and yet made it all a mockery. Man loves truth, tells it, rests only in it : how much more God, who is the trueness of truth ! Bodily senses imply their objects—the eye light, the ear sound ; the touch, the taste, the smell, things relative thereto. Spiritual senses likewise foretell their object, are silent prophecies of endless life. The love of justice, beauty, truth, of man and God, points to realities unseen as yet. We are ever hungering after noblest things, and what we feed on makes us hunger more. The senses are satisfied, but the soul never.

Then, too, while this composite body unavoidably decays, this simple soul which is my life decays not ; reason, the affections, all the powers that make the man, decay

not. True, the organs by which they act become impaired. But there is no cause for thinking that love, conscience, reason, will ever become weaker in man, but cause for thinking that all these continually become more strong. Was the mind of Newton gone when his frame, long overtasked, refused its wonted work ?

Here on earth, everything in its place and time matures. The acorn and the chestnut, things natural to this climate, ripen every year. A longer season would make them no better nor bigger. It is so with our body ; that, under proper conditions, becomes mature. It is so with all the things of earth. But man is not fully grown as the acorn and the chestnut, never gets mature. Take the best man and the greatest—all his faculties are not developed, fully grown, and matured. He is not complete in the qualities of a man ; nay, often half his qualities lie all unused. Shall we conclude these are never to obtain development and do their work ? The analogy of nature tells us that man, the new-born plant, is but removed by death

to another soil, where he shall grow complete and become mature.

Then, too, each other thing, under its proper conditions, not only ripens, but is perfect also after its kind. Each clover seed is perfect as a star. Every lion, as a general rule, is a common representation of all lionhood: the ideal of his race made real in him, a thousand years of life would not make him more. But where is the Adamitic man—the type and representative of his race—who makes actual its idea? Even Jesus bids you not call him good: no man has all the manhood of mankind. Yes, there are rudiments of greatness in us all, but abortive, incomplete, and stopped in embryo. Now, all these elements of manhood point as directly to another state as the unfinished walls of yonder rising church intimate that the work is not complete, that the artist here intends a roof, a window there, here a tower, and over all a heaven-piercing spire. All men are abortions, our failure pointing to the real success. Nay, we are all waiting to be born, our whole nature looking

to another world, and dimly presaging what that world shall be. Death, however we misname him, seasonable or out of time, is the birth-angel, that alone.

Besides, the presence of injustice, of wrong, points the same way. The fact that one man goes out of this life in childhood, in manhood, at any time before the natural measure of his days is full ; the fact that anyone is by circumstances made wretched, that he is hindered from his proper growth, and has not here his natural due—all intimates to me his future life. I know that God is just. I know his justice, too, shall make all things right ; for he must have the power, the wish, the will therefor, to speak in human speech. I see the injustice in this city, its pauperism, suffering, and crime—men smarting all their life, and by no fault of theirs. I know there must be another hemisphere to balance this ; another life, wherein justice shall come to all and for all. Else God were unjust ; and an unjust God to me is no God at all, but a wretched chimera which my soul rejects with scorn. I see

the autumn prefigured in the spring. The flowers of May-Day foretold the harvest, its rosy apples and its yellow ears of corn. As the bud now lying cold and close upon the bark of every tree throughout our northern clime is a silent prophecy of yet another spring and other summers, and harvests too, so this instinctive love of justice, scantily budding here and nipped by adverse fate, silently but clearly tells of a kingdom of heaven. I take some miserable child here in this city, squalid in dress and look, ignorant and wicked, too, as most men judge of vagrant vice, made so by circumstances over which that child had no control; I turn off with a shudder at the public wrong we have done and still are doing; but in that child I see proof of another world, yes, heaven glittering from behind those saddened eyes. I know that child has a man's nature in him, perhaps a Channing's trusting piety, perhaps a Newton's mind—has surely rudiments of more than these; for what were Channing, Newton, both of them, but embryo men? I turn off with a

shudder at the public wrong, but a faith in God's justice, in that child's eternal life, which nothing can ever shake.

A third argument is drawn from the nature of God. He, as the Infinite, the Unconditioned, the Absolute, is all-powerful, all-wise, all-good. Therefore he must wish the best of all possible things, must know the best of all possible things, must will the best of all possible things, and so bring it to pass. Life is a possible thing, eternal life is possible. Neither implies a contradiction. Yes, to me they seem necessary, more than possible. Now, then, as life, serene and happy life, is better than non-existence, so immortality is better than perpetual death. God must know that, wish that, will that, and so bring that about. Man, therefore, must be immortal. This argument is brief indeed, but I see not how it can be withstood.

The belief in immortality is one thing ; the special form thereof, the definite notion of the future life, another and quite different. The popular doctrine in our churches I think is this : that this body which we lay

in the dust shall one day be raised again, the living soul joined on anew, and both together live the eternal life. But where is the soul all this time, between our death-day and our day of rising ? Some say it sleeps unconscious, dead all this time ; others, that it is in heaven now, or else in hell ; others, in a strange and transient home, imperfect in its joy or woe, waiting the final day and more complete account. It seems to me this notion is absurd and impossible—absurd in its doctrine relative to the present condition of departed souls, impossible in what it teaches of the resurrection of this body. If my soul is to claim the body again, which shall it be, the body I was born into or that I died out of ? If I live to the common age of men, changing my body as I must, and dying daily, then I have worn some eight or ten bodies. So at the last, which body shall claim my soul, for the ten had her ? The soul herself may claim them all. But, to make the matter still more intricate, there is in the earth but a certain portion of matter out of which human bodies can be made.

Considering all the millions of men now living, the myriads of millions that have been before, it is plain, I think, that all the matter suitable for human bodies has been lived over many times. So if the world were to end to-day, instead of each old man having ten bodies from which to choose the one that fits him best, there would be ten men, all clamouring for each body! Shall I then have a handful of my former dust, and that alone? That is not the resurrection of my former body. This whole doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh seems to me impossible and absurd.

What is this future life? What can we know of it besides its existence? Some men speak as if they knew the way around heaven as around the wards of their native city. What we can know in detail is cautiously to be inferred from the nature of man and the nature of God. I will modestly set down what it seems to me.

It must be a conscious state. Man is by his nature conscious—yes, self-conscious. He is progressive in his self-consciousness. I cannot think a removal out of the body

destroys this consciousness, rather that it enhances and intensifies this. Yet consciousness in the next life must differ as much from consciousness here as the ripe peach differs from the blossom, or the bud, or the bark, or the earthly materials out of which it grew. The child is no limit to the man, nor my consciousness now to what I may be, must be, hereafter.

It must be a social state. Our nature is social, our joys social. For our progress here, our happiness, we depend on one another. Must it not be so there? It must be an advance upon our nature and condition here. All the analogy of nature teaches that. Things advance from small to great, from base to beautiful. The girl grows into a woman : the bud swells into the blossom, that into the fruit. The process over, the work begins anew. How much more must it be so in the other life ! What old powers we shall discover, now buried in the flesh, what new powers shall come upon us in that new state, no man can know : it were but poetic idleness to talk of them. We see in some great man

what power of intellect, imagination, justice, goodness, piety, he reveals, lying latent in us all. How men bungle in their works of art ! No Raphael can paint a dewdrop or a flake of frost. Yet some rude man, tired with his work, lies down beneath a tree, his head upon his swarthy arm, and sleep shuts, one by one, these five scant portals of the soul, and what an artist is he made at once ! How brave a sky he paints above him, with what golden garniture of clouds set off ! What flowers and trees, what men and women does he not create, and moving in celestial scenes ! What years of history does he condense in one short minute, and, when he wakes, shakes off the purple drapery of his dream as if it were but worthless dust and girds him for his work anew ! What other powers there are shut up in men, less known than this artistic phantasy—powers of seeing the distant, recalling the past, predicting the future, feeling at once the character of men—of this we know little, only by rare glimpses at the unwonted side of things. But yet we know enough

to guess there are strange wonders there waiting to be revealed.

What form our conscious, social, and increased activity shall take, we know not. We know of that no more than before our birth we knew of this world, of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch, or the things which they reveal. We are not born into that world, have not its senses yet. This we know, that the same God, all-powerful, all-wise, all-good, rules there and then, as here and now. Who cannot trust him to do right and best for all? For my own part I feel no wish to know how or where or what I shall be hereafter. I know it will be right for my truest welfare, for the good of all. I am satisfied with this trust.

Yet the next life must be a state of retribution. Thither we carry nothing but ourselves, our naked selves. Our fortune we leave behind us; our honours and rank return to such as gave; even our reputation—the good or ill men thought we were—clings to us no more. We go thither without our staff or scrip—nothing but the man we are. Yet that man is the

result of all life's daily work, it is the one thing which we have brought to pass. I cannot believe men who have voluntarily lived mean, little, vulgar, and selfish lives, will go out of this and into that, great, noble, generous, good, and holy. Can the practical saint and the practical hypocrite enter on the same course of being together ? I know the sufferings of bad men here, the wrong they do their nature, and what comes of that wrong. I think that suffering is the best part of sin, the medicine to heal it with. What men suffer here from their wrongdoing is its natural consequence ; but all that suffering is a mercy, designed to make them better. Everything in this world is adapted to promote the welfare of God's creatures. Must it not be so in the next ? How many men seem wicked from our point of view who are not so from their own ! How many become infamous through no fault of theirs—the victims of circumstances, born into crime, of low and corrupt parents whom former circumstances made corrupt ! Such men cannot be sinners before God. Here they suffer

from the tyranny of appetites they never were taught to subdue : they have not the joy of a cultivated mind. The children of the wild Indian are capable of the same cultivation as children here, yet they are savages. Is it always to be so ? Is God to be partial in granting the favours of another life ? I cannot believe it. I doubt not that many a soul rises up from the dungeon and the gallows, yes, from dens of infamy amongst men, clean and beautiful before God. Christ, says the gospel, assured the penitent thief of sharing heaven with him—and that day. Many seem inferior to me who in God's sight must be far before me : men who now seem too low to learn of me here, may be too high to teach me there.

I cannot think the future world is to be feared, even by the worst of men. I had rather die a sinner than live one. Doubtless justice is there to be done : that may seem stern and severe. But, remember, God's justice is not like a man's ; it is not vengeance, but mercy ; not poison, but medicine. To me it seems tuition

more than chastisement. God is not the jailer of the universe, but the Shepherd of the people ; not the hangman of mankind, but their Physician ; yes, our Father. I cannot fear him as I fear men. I cannot fail to love. I abhor sin, I loathe and nauseate thereat ; most of all, at my own. I can plead for others and extenuate their guilt, perhaps they for mine, not I for my own. I know God's justice will overtake me, giving me what I have paid for. But I do not, cannot, fear it. I know his justice is love ; that, if I suffer, it is for my everlasting joy. I think this is a natural state of mind. I do not find that men ever dread the future life, or turn pale on their death-bed at thought of God's vengeance, except when a priesthood has frightened them to that. The world's literature, which is the world's confession, proves what I say. In Greece, in classic days, when there was no caste of priests, the belief in immortality was current and strong. But in all her varied literature I do not remember a man dying, yet afraid of God's vengeance. The rude

Indian of our native land did not fear to meet the Great Spirit face to face. I have sat by the bedside of wicked men and, while death was dealing with my brother, I have watched the tide slow ebbing from the shore, but I have known no one afraid to go. Say what we will, there is nothing stronger and deeper in men than confidence in God—a solemn trust that he will do us good. Even the worst man thinks God his Father ; and is he not ?

I know that suffering follows sin, lasting long as the sin. I thank God it is so ; that God's own angel stands there to warn back the erring Balaams, wandering toward woe. But God, who sends the rain, the dew, the sun, on me as on a better man, will at last, I doubt it not, make us all pure, all just, all good, and so at last all happy. This follows from the nature of God himself ; for the All-good must wish the welfare of his child, the All-wise know how to achieve that welfare, the All-powerful bring it to pass. Tell me he wishes not the eternal welfare of all men, then I say, That is not the God of the universe.

I own not that as God. Nay, I tell you it is not God you speak of, but some heathen fancy, smoking up from your unhuman heart. I would ask the worst of mothers, Did you forsake your child because he went astray, and mocked your word ? ‘ Oh, no,’ she says : ‘ he was but a child, he knew no better, and I led him right, corrected him for his good, not mine !’ Are we not all children before God, the wisest, oldest, wickedest, God’s child ? I am sure he will never forsake me, how wicked soever I become. I know that he is love—love, too, that never fails. I expect to suffer for each conscious, wilful wrong : I wish, I hope, I long to suffer for it. I am wronged if I do not ; what I do not outgrow, live over and forget here, I hope to expiate there. I fear a sin—not to outgrow a sin.

A man who has lived here a manly life must enter the next under the most favourable circumstances. I do not mean a man of mere negative goodness, starting in the road of old custom, with his wheels deep in the ruts, not having life enough

to go aside, but a positively good man, one bravely good. He has lived heaven here, and must enter higher up than a really wicked man, or a slothful one, or one but negatively good. He can go from earth to heaven, as from one room to another, pass gradually, as from winter to spring. To such a one no revolution appears needed. The next life, it seems, must be a continual progress, the improvement of old powers, the disclosure or accession of new ones. What nobler reach of thought, what profounder insight, what more heavenly imagination, what greater power of conscience, faith, and love, will bless us there and then, it were vain to calculate, it is far beyond our span. You see men now whose souls are one with God, and so his will works through them as the magnetic fire runs on along the unimpeding line. What happiness they have, it is they alone can say. How much greater must it be there, not even they can tell. Here the body helps us to some things. Through these five small loopholes the world looks in. How much more

does the body hinder us from seeing ? Through the sickly body yet other worlds look in. He who has seen only the daylight knows nothing of the heaven of stars which all night long hang overhead their lamps of gold. When death has dusted off his body from me, who will dream for me the new powers I shall possess ? It were vain to try. Time shall reveal it all.

Do men of the next world look in upon this ? Are they present with us, conscious of our deeds or thoughts ? Who knows ? Who can say aye or no ? The unborn know nothing of the life on earth, yet the born of earth know somewhat of them, and make ready for their coming. Who knows but men born to heaven are waiting for your birth to come, have gone to prepare a place for us ? All that is fancy, and not fact ; it is not philosophy, but poetry ; no more. Of this we may be sure, that what is best will be—what best for saint or sinner, what most conducive to their real good. That is no poetry, but unavoidable truth, which all mankind may well believe.

There are many who never attained their true stature here, yet without blameworthiness of theirs—men cheated of their growth. Many a Milton walks on his silent way, and goes down at last, not singing and unsung. How many a possible Newton or Descartes has dug the sewers of a city, and dies, giving no sign of the wealthy soul he bore.

Shall we remember the deeds of the former life—this man that he picked rags out of the mud in the streets, and another that he ruled nations? Who can tell? nay, who need care to ask? Such a remembrance seems not needed for retribution's sake. The oak remembers not each leaf it ever bore, though each helped to form the oak, its branch and bole. How much has gone from our bodies! we know not how it came or went! How much of our past life is gone from our memory, yet its result lives in our character! The saddler remembers not every stitch he took while an apprentice, yet each stitch helped to form the saddle

Shall we know our friends again ? For my own part I cannot doubt it, least of all when I drop a tear over their recent dust. Death does not separate them from us here. Can life in heaven do it ? They live in our remembrance ; memory rakes in the ashes of the dead, and the virtues of the departed flame up anew, enlightening the dim, cold walls of our consciousness. Much of our joy is social here : we only half enjoy an undivided good. God made mankind, but sundered that into men, that they might help one another. Must it not be so there, and we be with our real friends ? Man loves to think it, yet to trust is wiser than to prophesy. But the girl who went from us a little one may be as parent to her father when he comes, and the man who left us have far outgrown our dream of an angel when we meet again.

There are times when we think little of a future life. In a period of success, serene and healthy life, the day's good is good enough for that day. But there comes a time when this day's good is not enough, its ill too great to bear. When

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death comes down and wrenches off a friend from our side—wife, child, brother, father, a dear one taken—this life is not enough. Oh, no, not to the coldest, coarsest, and most sensual man. I put it to you, to the most heartless of you all, or the most cold and doubting : when you lay down in the earth your mother, sister, wife, or child, remembering that you shall see their face no more, is life enough ? Do you not reach out your arms for heaven, for immortality, and feel you cannot die ? When I see men at a feast, or busy in the street, I do not think of their eternal life—perhaps feel not my own ; but, when the stiffened body goes down to the tomb, sad, silent, remorseless, I feel there is no death for the man. That clod which yonder dust shall cover is not my brother. The dust goes to its place, the man to his own. It is then I feel my immortality. I look through the grave into heaven. I ask no miracle, no proof, no reasoning for me. I ask no risen dust to teach me immortality. I am conscious of eternal life.

But there are worse hours than these—seasons bitterer than death, sorrows that lie a latent poison in the heart, slowly sapping the foundations of our peace. There are hours when the best life seems a sheer failure to the man who lived it, his wisdom folly, his genius impotence, his best deed poor and small; when he wonders why he was suffered to be born; when all the sorrows of the world seem poured upon him; when he stands in a populous loneliness, and though weak, can only lean in upon himself. In such hour he feels the insufficiency of this life. It is only his cradle-time, he counts himself just born; all honours, wealth, and fame are but baubles in his baby hand; his deep philosophy but nursery rhymes. Yet he feels the immortal fire burning in his heart. He stretches his hands out from the swaddling-clothes of flesh, reaching after the topmost star, which he sees, or dreams he sees, and longs to go alone. Still worse, the consciousness of sin comes over him: he feels that he has insulted himself. All about him seems little—

himself little, yet clamouring to be great. Then we feel our immortality : through the garish light of day we see a star or two beyond. The soul within us feels her wings, contending to be born, impatient for the sky, and wrestles with the earthly worm that folds us in.

I would not slight this wondrous world. I love its day and night ; its flowers and its fruits are dear to me. I would not wilfully lose sight of a departing cloud. Every year opens new beauty in a star, or in a purple gentian fringed with loveliness. The laws, too, of matter seem more wonderful the more I study them, in the whirling eddies of the dust, in the curious shells of former life buried by thousands in a grain of chalk, or in the shining diagrams of light above my head. Even the ugly becomes beautiful when truly seen. I see the jewel in the bumpy toad. The more I live, the more I love this lovely world ; feel more its Author in each little thing, in all that is great. But yet I feel my immortality the more. In childhood the consciousness of immortal life buds

forth feeble, though full of promise. In the man it unfolds its fragrant petals, his most celestial flower, to mature its seed throughout eternity. The prospect of that everlasting life, the perfect justice yet to come, the infinite progress before us, cheer and comfort the heart. Sad and disappointed, full of self-reproach, we shall not be so for ever. The light of heaven breaks upon the night of trial, sorrow, sin ; the sombre clouds which overhung the east, grown purple now, tell us the dawn of heaven is coming in. Our faces, gleamed on by that, smile in the new-born glow : we are beguiled of our sadness before we are aware. The certainty of this provokes us to patience, it forbids us to be slothfully sorrowful. It calls us to be up and doing. The thought that all will at last be right, with the slave, the poor, the weak, and the wicked, inspires us with zeal to work for them here, and make it all right for them even now.

There is small merit in being willing to die : it seems almost sinful in a good man to wish it when the world needs him here

so much. It is weak and unmanly to be always looking and sighing voluptuously for that. But it is of great comfort to have in your soul the sure trust in immortality, of great value here and now to anticipate time, and live to-day the eternal life. That we may all do. The joys of heaven will begin as soon as we attain the character of heaven and do its duties. That may begin to-day. It is everlasting life to know God, to have his spirit dwelling in you, yourself at one with him. Try that and prove its worth. Justice, usefulness, wisdom, religion, love, are the best things we hope for in heaven. Try them on : they will fit you here not less becomingly. They are the best things of earth. Think no outlay of goodness and piety too great. You will find your reward begin here. As much goodness and piety, so much heaven. Men will not pay you, God will—pay you now, pay you hereafter and for ever.

WHERE TO FIND GOD

THE whole history of the world proves that men cannot be satisfied without religious faith ; they cannot rest until they find a living God to love, and trust, and worship. There have been many clever arguments to prove that there is a God, but the finest evidence is found within the deepest experience of the human soul. Nothing is more convincing of God's existence than this craving of the human mind to find an Infinite Mind, this throbbing of the human heart to feel the sympathy of an Eternal Love.

When I see the ocean rise in one great tidal-wave to flood every shore, then I know that some mighty attractive power is at work, brooding over those restless waters. And so, when I see the tides of human thought and feeling surge and

swell in longing, and hope, and aspiration, then I know that there must be a divine attraction drawing all souls to God. When we study the religions of the world, when we explore the religious consciousness, then we find this to be the deepest need of man's nature: 'O that I knew where I might find God!'

And there have been three answers to that cry.

Some have said, There is no God at all, and so there is no use in trying to find him. But atheism will never triumph until it has revolutionized human nature. Religion is so involved in the very structure of our being, that you cannot root it out until you untwist all the fibres of our intellectual and moral nature.

Others say (especially some modern philosophers), that there is indeed an absolute and eternal Power to whom you may give the name of 'God,' but that God is hidden in inscrutable mystery, unknown and unknowable; and however hard you try, however far you seek, you can never find him.

But as long as men believe there is a God, do you think they will ever give up the search after him? In spite of all the arguments of agnosticism, men will still hope that by some new search and fresh effort the unknown God may yet be discovered. Our dauntless sailors go, time after time, in spite of scores of failures, and risk their lives, and encounter frightful sufferings, to seek the mysterious North Pole shrouded in Arctic ice and snow. And do you think that the bold, adventurous soul will not strive, again and again, to find out God, undaunted by dogmatic atheism and despairing agnosticism?

But the third answer is the one I wish to enforce: There is a God, and it is possible for us to find him and to know him.

Now I am not going to try to *prove* that there is a God. I am not going to try to answer all the arguments of atheists and agnostics. I am going to take for granted that you feel your need of God, that you cannot help realizing that there is an awful Power by whom your life is

compassed behind and before. I shall take this for granted, while I point out what seems to me the best way to find out God.

GOD IN NATURE

Men have tried to find God in Nature. It was through Nature that men first began to think about God ; or rather, the powers of Nature made them believe in a great many gods. At first men were like little children—everything was personal, everything had a life of its own. The sun was a god that travelled daily through the sky. Every curious stone was a deity. Every strangely shaped log of wood was the shrine of a spirit. And so, at first (in primitive fetish-worship), the imagination found gods innumerable in all the stars of heaven, and in every object upon earth. And though Nature-worship seems to us very low and degrading, yet it had its place in the education of the world. By fetish-worship men became convinced that there was a Life, a Power, an Energy, vaster than them-

selves, which they must worship and obey. But men did not find in Nature the God for whom our hearts crave. Even when men came to believe in One Almighty Creator, yet the God of Nature was only worshipped, and obeyed, and feared, but he was not loved. Men cringed and crouched before him, but they could not rise into loving fellowship and joyful communion. Nature, by itself, reveals a God of strength, beauty, providence; but also a God who seems cruel to man's weakness, inexorable to man's sins, and deaf to man's prayers. Nature reveals an Almighty Ruler, not a gracious Father.

GOD IN THE BIBLE

Ah ! but (a great many people will at once cry out) there is another and more wonderful revelation of God. This book, the Bible, can tell you more about God than you could discover, though you studied Nature for ever. And I quite agree with these people, that there is a revelation of God in the Bible, a higher

and sublimer revelation than that which is found in the physical laws of the universe. Here, in the Bible, you are able to study the human soul ; and when you come to the living soul, you come nearest of all to the living God. I do not think anybody could prize the Bible more than I do. It is the grandest book I know, and there are whole pages which shine and burn with the fire of inspiration. But what is the Bible ? It is the history of man's search to find out God. It tells us how, for ages, men were trying to answer the cry, ' O that I knew where I might find him ! ' It tells us how men could not rest satisfied with the terrible Power of the universe, and began dimly to guess that there was an Infinite Love and an Eternal Father. The Scriptures tell us how *other* men have searched for God. But if I am to have a God, I must seek him and find him for myself. You may read these prayers of David, these hymns of Isaiah, these doubts and struggles of Job ; but all they can do is to show you how you may find God for yourself. Even if you

could prove that God himself wrote the Bible, I could not be satisfied. Why, the latest book in the Bible is about seventeen hundred years old. And I want to know, not what God said a thousand years ago—I want to know what message he has for us to-day. If there be a living God, he must be able to speak to me as well as to Isaiah, and Paul, and Christ. Believing, as I do, in a present living God, when I have read the Bible, I will shut it up and go to the shrine of my own soul, and say, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.’

When my friend was travelling in distant lands his letters were precious; but best of all it is when he comes home, and I can clasp his hand, and talk to him face to face. Even if God wrote the Bible, there is something better than to be always reading the divine writings—and that is, to feel the touch of the divine presence, and to hold communion with the divine mind. And I can understand how some one might read the Bible, and say, ‘I wish I could feel as near to God as those great Psalmists, and Prophets, and

Apostles. They found God. O that I knew where I might find him too !'

GOD IN CHRIST

Ah ! (says some one) you can only find God in Jesus Christ. *There*, in the person and work of the great Redeemer, is the full and perfect manifestation of the unknown God. Now what do they mean when they say that Jesus Christ is the revelation of God ? They must mean that the love and compassion, the purity and truth of Christ are divine qualities. They must mean that the character of Christ was in wonderful conformity to the will of God. In short, Christ had found God, found him as no one else had ever found him. Christ found God in the depths of his own profound religious consciousness ; he lived in conscious communion with God ; he knew the Father's will, and always obeyed it. His human nature was brought into such marvellous atonement with the divine nature, that in a jubilee of blessedness he cried, ' I and my Father are one !' And so, when

men asked Christ the way to God, he said, 'Live such a life as I am living, and you will find God as your Father.' He said, 'I am the door'; 'I am the way.' But you cannot find God by believing that Jesus found him. If Jesus is the way to God, then I must not rest satisfied with admiring, and loving, and worshipping him.

If Jesus could see the thousands of people worshipping him to-day, he would cry, 'Do not linger near *me*. Go into the living temple where the Father reveals himself.' I cannot find God by believing in Christ's divinity, but only by becoming divine myself. The gate of the temple may be very beautiful, but its beauty must not keep me from passing into the holy place, where I can find the immediate vision and voice of God.

GOD IN THE SOUL OF MAN

There it is that alone you can find God. Unless you find God in your own soul, you will find him nowhere; but when you find him *there*, you will find him everywhere—in the person of Christ and in the

page of Scripture, while even the terrors of Nature shall become the gracious discipline of a Father's love. And that is the way in which the New Testament continually tells us we must find God. 'Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.' 'God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Now I am not saying that you can find out *everything* about God. But I do say that in the experience of your own souls you can find out the best things about God ; you can get the very knowledge you most need. This knowledge of God, which comes from our own human experience, is precious, because every one can possess it. It is not only for saints, and theologians, and philosophers. It is for labouring men, and weary women, and even for little children. This religion is the most democratic thing I know. It can be understood by anyone whose heart throbs with love and whose soul aspires after purity. It does away with the aristocracy of priestcraft, and proclaims a glorious democracy of souls, who all

share the divine life and strive after the divine likeness. That was the sublime, universal religion of humanity which Jesus taught when he said, 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' The open way to God is through the human heart—the heart made pure and childlike by the inspiration of truth and love. And the finest thing of all is this : the discovery that, in all our search for God, God has been seeking us. We talk of man groping his way after God. But Jesus tells us that the Father is always seeking those who shall worship him in spirit and in truth. You could not long for God if God were not longing for you. These longings and cravings within our nature are the tokens of his presence and the movements of his Spirit. He not only gives the answer, but he prompts the prayer. When the human soul cries, 'O that I knew where I might find him !' you may be sure God is not far off.

Now, gather up the lessons : (1) You all feel your need of God. (2) You must find

God for yourselves. (3) You must find him in your own higher nature—in the purity of your soul, the love of your heart, and the truth of your mind. (4) And at length you shall discover that God has always been seeking you, and that at last he has found you. You have found God, because God has found you.

THE END

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